

an intricate and provocative discussion of the process whereby new trends gain public acceptance, of the numerous and complex links between artists and society—a process that encompasses the frequently unresolvable problem of creativity and popularity. Much of Sternin's inquiry into the nature of change in styles and popular tastes is more in the form of a hypothesis. But the thrust of his argument in the text, and even more in the copious notes that puncture various oversimplifications, is that a historian is obliged not only to delineate the predominant traits of general development, but also to recognize the uniqueness of some phenomena. This is not a revision of the Marxist, sociological approach but a demonstration of its refinement and an application of the approach at its best.

ELIZABETH KRIDL VALKENIER
Columbia University

SOVIET CINEMA: DIRECTORS AND FILMS. Compiled by *Alexander S. Birkos*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, Shoe String Press, 1976. x, 344 pp. Photographs. \$17.50.

This book leaves the reader with a feeling of sadness over a lost opportunity. A great deal of work has been done, and a not insignificant amount of money has been spent. The project was useful in itself. The result, however, not only fails to meet our expectations, but raises some elementary questions concerning the writing—or compiling, as in the present case—and the publishing of books.

The book consists of two incomplete lists, one of film makers, another of films—sometimes annotated, sometimes not—which are of little value to the “general movie goer” at whom the volume claims to be aimed. Instead of a condensed lively description, based on a much larger amount of knowledge of which he is being offered just the cream, the reader seems to be offered practically all the author himself knows. This might be acceptable for a thorough compilation of data on a limited and clearly defined period, but it is insufficient for any attempt at popularization of such a vast and—with the exception of the Jay Leyda classic, *Kino*—uncharted area.

How did this book come into being? Who were the readers of the manuscript, who was the editor, and what was the role of the publisher? Why did no one explain to the dedicated author of this undertaking—which “started as an avocational interest,” stemming “from a life-long interest in Soviet films”—that there are certain rules by which he should abide? He obviously did not realize that he had an obligation to explain how he selected the films listed; why he chose certain directors and not others—Basov, Dzigan, A. Ivanov, Legoshin, Lotianu, Motyl, Okeev, Osyka, Panfilov, and many others are not listed; why he did not use the fairly reliable catalog “Sovetskie khudozhestvennyye fil'my” (Moscow, 1961–68)—or if he did use this catalog, why is it not listed in his bibliography; and, finally, why films are listed without their original titles, an omission inconceivable in publications of a more serious character.

The purpose of the volume is not clear. The book does not enrich our understanding of Soviet film history, and it relies almost entirely upon official Soviet sources. The author, obviously a dedicated moviegoer, has failed in his attempt to publish a guide to Soviet films and directors, mainly because he has not raised his interest to a professional level. Nor was he pushed by his publisher and his editor to compile, at the very least, a reliable, comprehensive, and consistent reference work. Everything seems to have been abandoned at midpoint.

A. J. LIEHM
University of Pennsylvania