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# The Ecstasy of Economics: the Evolution of Sergei Eisenstein's the Old and the New

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**THE ECSTASY OF ECONOMICS:  
THE EVOLUTION OF SERGEI EISENSTEIN'S  
*THE OLD AND THE NEW***

by

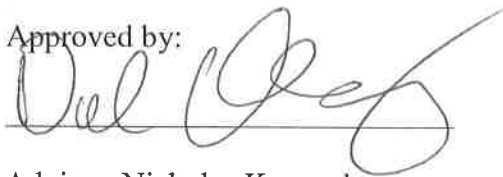
**William H. Persing**

A Proposal Submitted to the Honors Council

For Honors in Russian Studies

May 5, 2015

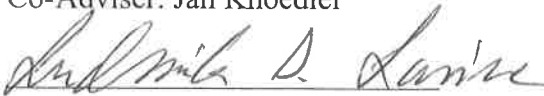
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### Abstract

In my thesis, I analyze the development of the most often forgotten work by Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein – *The Old and the New*. The production of the film from 1926 to 1929 was during a tumultuous period of economic transition during the Soviet Union when the socialist state moved from the mixed markets of the New Economic Policy (NEP) to the centralized planning of the First Five-Year Plan. The development of *The Old and the New* mirrors the economic period. I analyze how Eisenstein actively adapted his cinematic practice to accommodate the changing landscape of Soviet economic policy. Additionally, I explore the influence that Eisenstein’s work on an uncompleted film adaptation of Karl Marx’s *Capital* had on the development of his theories of montage and his completion of *The Old and the New*. I argue that Eisenstein’s theories of montage were transformed by his studying of Marx’s dialectical method, and, as a result, his completed version of *The Old and the New* differs significantly from its original conception as *The General Line*. Finally, I evaluate the ways in which Eisenstein sought to inspire economic development. From this I develop my theory of “the ecstasy of economics.” Epitomized by the most famous scene of the film “the cream separator scene,” Eisenstein works to infuse a sense of fervor around the idea of collectivization and development. The protagonist Marfa experiences a moment of pure bliss, while kneeling before the cream separator, which not only inspires her to transform her village, but strives to provoke the whole of the Soviet Union toward the same “ecstasy of economics” that Eisenstein envisioned.

In loving memory of my Grandfather, Dr. Amos Persing III  
Two generations of Bucknellians, Old and New

## Acknowledgments

While studying at the International University in Moscow during the spring of 2014, I attended an exhibit at the Manezh by British film director Peter Greenaway and Dutch theater director Sashkia Boddeke entitled “The Golden Age of the Russian Avant-Garde.” The multimedia exhibit featured twelve actors dramatizing some of the paramount artists of the movement, while massive recreations of their works appeared across the screen. The exhibit used Kazimir Malevich’s “Black Square” as the central metaphor for the movement – which was shown to fissure and crack on screen, symbolizing the eventual collapse of the avant-garde. The exhibit left me with a desire to learn more about this dynamic period in Russian history. How did the avant-garde bend under the weight of social, political and economic changes overtaking the Soviet Union and when did it finally break? As a Russian Studies and Economics double major, this proved to be an inspirational starting point for my senior honors thesis. In researching the period, I struggled to find a paradigmatic work that could encapsulate the rise and eventual collapse of movement. It was thanks to an Eisenstein that I eventually decided upon my topic – Prof. Ken Eisenstein. In the fall of 2014 at the Campus Theatre, he screened Sergei Eisenstein’s *The Old and the New*. The film tells the tale of a peasant named Marfa, who is inspired to transform her backwards peasant village into an advanced cooperative. The four-year evolution of the film, which occurred during the transition from NEP to the First Five-Year Plan was the perfect work to analyze the period.

I would like to acknowledge the contribution of the *troika* of advisors, who helped me throughout the thesis process. Prof. Knoedler for all her insight and recommendations on drafting my circular flow diagrams and researching the economic history of the Soviet Union. I would also like to thank Prof. Lavine not only for advising me, but also for being my Russian professor for the past five years. Her substantial knowledge on the NEP period and the Russian avant-garde was an invaluable resource. Finally, I would like to thank my advisor Prof. Kupensky whose acumen for interpreting art, knowledge of Russian history, and the First Five-Year Plan were an outstanding resource in the development of my thesis. The dedication, compassion, and patience these professors showed me helped to make all of this possible.

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## **Chapter I: Toward the Theory of the Ecstasy of Economics: An Introduction**

### **i. The Ecstasy of Economics**

In a review of the seminal scene of Sergei Eisenstein's *The Old and the New* from the French magazine *Le Mois*, the author was struck by the overt sensuality evoked by the cream separator rather than the economic objectives the machine would ultimately achieve. The author remarks:

Suddenly, right before our eyes, milk condenses and turns to cream! Eyes sparkle, teeth shine through breaking smiles. A joyfully smiling, peasant girl, Martha, stretches out her hands to capture the flow of cream, vertically streaming toward her; cream splatters all over her face; she bursts into a fit of laughter, her joy being sensual, almost animal in nature. One almost expects her to cast off all her clothes in a frenzy of passion to wallow naked in the flood of well-being produced by the spouting torrents of cream...<sup>1</sup>

For Eisenstein, the cream separator was not only an object of economic transformation but also an object of sexual desire. Through his use of montage, Eisenstein elicits a palpable tension between emotion and reason, economics and aesthetics. How then does a sexually laden scene of milk bubbling, foaming, and then erupting onto the jovial bodies of rural Russian peasants comment on the Soviet Union's abandonment of the free markets of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in favor of the centralized planning of the First Five-Year Plan?

In 1929 Sergei Eisenstein unveiled his newest directorial achievement, a film that explored the collectivization of the countryside and the grand transformation of the economy through the experience of a strong-willed peasant girl named Marfa. As cream

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<sup>1</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, trans. Herbert Marshall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 40.

engulfs the screen and covers the hands and face of Marfa, she experiences a moment of ecstasy that will forever transform her life and the development of her village. What the cream separator provokes in her is what I term “the ecstasy of economics,” an all-consuming desire for capital goods and economic progress along the Marxist-Leninist path of the First Five-Year Plan. The word ecstasy derives from the Greek *ekstasis*, “to put out-of-place” with the roots *ex* meaning “out” and *histanai* “to place.”<sup>2</sup> Ecstasy is defined as “a state of being beyond reason and self-control through intense emotional excitement, pain, or other sensation: obsession by powerful feeling.”<sup>3</sup> The intense sensation Marfa experience with the cream separator is a moment of absolute joy, a state that is purely emotional. Historically, ecstasy has been applied to many different types of consciousness. There is the religious connotation, where one feels an intense out-of-body experience before God. As Eisenstein stated in his “Methods of Montage,” “it is not the Holy Grail that inspires both doubt and ecstasy, but a cream separator.”<sup>4</sup> There is also the sensual feeling experienced during sex. For Eisenstein, the ecstasy Marfa experiences

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<sup>2</sup> Eisenstein himself was aware of the etymology of the term, for in his essay “The Milk Separator and the Holy Grail,” Eisenstein’s writes that “the primary indication of *pathos* in composition is a state of continuous ‘ecstasy’ (*isstuplenie*), a continuous state of ‘being beside oneself’ (*vykhod iz sebiia*), a continuing leap of each separate element or sign of the work of art from quality to quality.” Here, Eisenstein uses the term *isstuplenie*, literally “to step” (*stupat’*) “out of” (*iz*), which is a calque from the Greek. Elsewhere, in “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” he describes his own “creative ecstasy (*tvorcheskii ekstaz*)” of “hearing and feeling the shots” of *The Old and the New*. Here, Eisenstein uses the term *ekstaz*, which is taken directly from the Greek. For an expanded discussion of “ecstasy” and “pathos,” see Eisenstein’s extensive theoretical treatise *Nonindifferent Nature*. Eisenstein, 38,69. Sergei Eisenstein, “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” *Film Form and Film Sense: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (Cleveland, The World Publishing Press, 1968), 64-71.

<sup>3</sup> *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*. 3rd ed. (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1981), 720.

<sup>4</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form and the Film Sense*, trans. Jay Leyda (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1968), 77.

from the cream separator and from the economic reforms of the period here also serve as a substitute for sexual desire. In this way Eisenstein is playing with Sigmund Freud's theory of sublimation, where the desire for sexual fulfillment would be transformed into something higher and loftier. We know that Eisenstein actively read Freud and it is highly likely that he became familiar with his theory of sublimation through Freud's 1910 work, "Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood."<sup>5</sup> For Eisenstein, the separator would supersede divinity and sexuality at the same time, an object that would inspire workers from all over the Soviet Union to strive toward developing the nation economically. The pathos of the separator would represent for Eisenstein "movement, through flight, through the epic breath only when there is a sudden upward surge of all passions directed toward a single goal."<sup>6</sup> Marfa is symbolically impregnated with an economic vision that pushes her toward the purchase of a cow, then a grain sorter, and finally a tractor! Propagandistically, Eisenstein hoped to evoke in the audience a deep desire for the capital goods flashed across the silver screen. He also hoped that the audience would lust after the cream separator and all it represents with the same fervor

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<sup>5</sup> Al LaValley in *Eisenstein at 100* notes, "As Håkan Lövgren and others have pointed out, [Eisenstein's] reading of Freud's book on Leonardo is central to his conception of both the artist and homosexuality. Eisenstein admired this book because it gave him a way to see his homosexuality as debilitating but capable of being sublimated and transcended through art, made into a kind of aesthetic ecstasy." Eisenstein frequently makes use of Freud's theory of sublimation throughout this career. It is especially pronounced during the cream separator scene of *The Old and the New*, where sublimation is used to build both a sexual and religious sense of ecstasy around Marfa's reaction to the condensed milk. The homoeroticism of the scene is also predominate as the scene intercuts images of the young male peasant cranking the wheel of the machine, phallic shaped spigots pointed directly at the camera, and the eventual eruption of cream from the separator. For text that LaValley referenced with regards to DaVinci and Freud see: Freud, Sigmund. "Leonardo Da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Volume XI. trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1962). Al LaValley. "Gender Lines in Eisenstein." *Eisenstein at 100: A Reconsideration*, ed. Al LaValley and Barry P. Scherr (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 58.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Moussianc, *Sergei Eisenstein: An Investigation into his Films and Philosophy* (New York: Crown Publishers Inc., 1970), 32-33.

they seek sexual and religious fulfillment. The “ecstasy of economics” is the central theory through which I will analyze the evolution of *The Old and the New* and how it shaped Eisenstein the economist.

Eisenstein is not merely concerned with the small strides of a rural village on the periphery. The scenes of the successfully condensed milk are intercut with images of powerful hydroelectric dams ready to illuminate the Soviet Union. There is nothing small about the sense of scope in this scene, the film as a whole, or how it fits into the broader tale of economic change. The evolution of *The Old and the New* follows the famous Soviet director through one of the most tumultuous periods, both politically and economically for the young socialist state. Like his female protagonist, Eisenstein would be consumed by the economic ecstasy of the era in his quest to produce a film dealing with the agricultural transformation of the countryside. The sojourn to complete this challenge, however, would be filled with changes and revolutions that reflect the broader economic history of the time.

The journey of *The Old and the New* does not begin in the small village of Marfa, but rather in the opulent halls of the Moscow Kremlin. A speech delivered by Joseph Stalin at the Fourteenth Party Congress in December of 1925 is where Eisenstein first received his inspiration for *The Old and the New*. Here, the General Secretary would outline two divergent paths toward development that the Soviet Union could adopt. Stalin proclaimed that “there are two general lines: one comes from the fact that our country has to remain agrarian for a long time, must export agricultural produce and import equipment, that we have to maintain this position and develop along this line in the

future.”<sup>7</sup> This was not the line Stalin envisioned, nor was it the path the Soviet Union would choose. There was another line, one that Stalin planned to use. This second general line comes “from the fact that we must make every effort to make our country economically self-sufficient, independent, based on the domestic market, a country that would serve as a focus for attracting to itself all the other countries, that would gradually fall away from capitalism and pour into the mainstream of the socialist economy.”<sup>8</sup> This was the general line that Stalin would set into motion and would inspire Eisenstein to begin work on his first purely economic film.

*The General Line* would be conceived as a NEP-era response to the changing face of rural agriculture. The film would take nearly five years to complete and would undergo many reshoots and edits that fundamentally reshaped the themes and scope of the film. These changes were brought about from both external and internal forces working on Eisenstein and reshaping how he conceptualized *The General Line*. It is through the development of the film – from an agriculturally based companion film to *Battleship Potemkin* to a more general tale of struggle and triumph – that changes in Soviet economic policies are represented. The film offers a microcosm of the Soviet Union’s transition from NEP to the First Five-Year Plan. This can be seen both in the edits and modifications that occurred over the four-year evolution of the film. The conscious changes on the part of Eisenstein reflect policy prerogatives of the two economic periods

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<sup>7</sup> I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, T. 7 (M.: GOSIZDAT politicheskoi literatury, 1952), 298-99. The translation of Stalin’s speech is my own. All future translations from primary sources, specifically the title cards from *The Old and the New*, are my own translations as well.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 298-99.

as Eisenstein had to recut what was originally a film made to show the success of NEP in the countryside to instead reflect the virtues of a single centrally-planned system.

## **ii. Scholarship on *The Old and the New***

Of all of his completed works, *The Old and the New* is by far the least discussed in scholarship. To my knowledge this is one of the longest dedicated critiques of *The Old and the New* in English. I will frame my arguments alongside a short economic history of NEP and the First Five-Year Plan, a speculative history of the influence of Marx on Eisenstein's theory of montage, and a close cinematic analysis of *The Old and the New*. This analysis allows not only for an understanding of the central themes of the film and how they integrate economic principles but also a discussion of how Eisenstein used and developed his theories of montage to represent economic imperatives. *The Old and the New* is as much about the rise of Stalin and collectivization as it is about a lone peasant heroine trying to develop her village through the key economic development technique of capital investment. Economics offers a powerful lens through which to analyze this film from artistic, propagandistic, and social points of view.

There are three major cinematic analyses of the film that have informed this study. The first English-language study of significance to deal with *The Old and the New* comes from the American avant-garde director and film historian Jay Leyda. The first edition of his *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, published in 1960, briefly discusses Eisenstein's agrarian film. The scholarly consensus has evolved about whether *The General Line* and *The Old and the New* are essentially the same or different films.

On this point, Leyda argues “though I have often been told that *The General Line*, on being resumed after *October*, had a completely different plan, I find it hard to conclude that there was any total alteration in its general character or treatment or emphasis.”<sup>9</sup>

Leyda bases this argument on the fact that much of the script, casting, and shooting was completed before Eisenstein’s temporary hiatus from the film in 1927 to direct *October*. Leyda’s claim that the films were not radically different would later be challenged by the analysis of Vance Kepley Jr.

Though Leyda provided the first and most thorough analysis of *The Old and the New* for his time, his writings still omitted some important aspects of the film’s development. The publication of Vance Kepley Jr.’s article “The Evolution of *Old and New*” in 1974 expanded the discourse of the film by incorporating the changing economic policies into his interpretation. Unlike Leyda, Kepley broke the development of *The Old and the New* into two distinct periods, *The General Line* produced under NEP, and the final cut of the film, which premiered at a major period of exuberance for collectivization and the First Five-Year Plan. For Kepley the shift away from NEP toward the First Five-Year plan had major repercussions for the development of the film. He argues that Eisenstein originally conceived of the film as an agricultural companion film to *Battleship Potemkin*, but the capricious economic landscape forced Eisenstein to reedit the film to better reflect the present economic conditions in the late 1920s. Kepley’s analysis greatly expanded how later critics viewed and wrote about *The Old and the New*,

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<sup>9</sup> Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 262.



but his writings still were missing a key component to understanding the progression of film.

This last major breakthrough would come with the publication of Annette Michelson's three-part work entitled "Reading Eisenstein Reading 'Capital'." The first part was a translation, produced by Maciej Sliwowski, Jay Leyda, and Michelson, on Eisenstein's notes pertaining to a proposed film version of Marx's *Capital*.<sup>10</sup> Michelson's two subsequent sections of analysis on Eisenstein's *Capital*, published two years after Kopley's article, offers a close look at the intellectual development of Eisenstein during his break between *The General Line* and his eventual return to the film. Not only does his work provide important information on how Eisenstein spent his interlude between the production periods of the film, it also sheds some light on what may have shaped his views when he eventually returned to *The General Line*. Michelson's articles are an important source for speculating about the effect that Eisenstein's reading of Marx's *Capital* had on his production of *The Old and the New* as well as his development of his theories of montage.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that in Jay Leyda's 1982 publication *Eisenstein at Work*, which includes production stills, drawings, and notes for all his major works, he categorizes *The General Line* and *The Old and the New* under two different title sections. In choosing to represent the two films under separate sections, with *Capital* and *October* in between, it is clear that Leyda's reading of the film evolved to reflect these recent discoveries. Jay Leyda and Zina Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 32.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Aumont in *Montage Eisenstein* argues against the assertion that Marx played into the development of Eisenstein's theories of montage. On the question of univocally in Eisenstein's montage theories, Aumont argues that "Eisenstein's real answers to this question are not, in fact, to be found in the *Notes on Capital*. His practical response will be in the work done on representation in *The General Line* (where, as we have seen, the 'sensory' parameters are quite central to the constitution of meaning), and his theoretical response will pass through a number of stages (the 'interior monologue' among others) before it assumes rough draft form in the 1937 treatise on montage." By arguing that Eisenstein's *Notes on Capital* did not have a major influence on his overall development of his montage theories, Aumont undervalues a major chapter in the life of Eisenstein. My thesis will dispute this claim by Aumont and draw close

In my thesis, I hope to harmonize these works into a more complete picture of the development of *The Old and the New* by building on the analytical achievements of these three film critics. Additionally, I plan to expand my analysis into the realm of economics. I will make the argument, both as an economist and a humanist specializing in Russian language and history, that aesthetics played a vital role in economic development of the Soviet Union.

### iii. The Legacy of *The Old and the New*

For as much as Eisenstein and *The Old and the New* contributed to the understanding of economic principles in his own country, *The Old and the New* is easily the least known of his films in the West. Leyda claims in *Kino* “several film-making generations from now the montage of Eisenstein’s fourth film will be just as unique in its range of ‘sensual montage’ as *October* is unique for its vocabulary of ‘intellectual montage.’”<sup>12</sup> Of all the claims that Leyda puts forth, this is the furthest from reality. *The Old and the New* to this date has not received the same amount of scholarly attention as *October* and intellectual montage. There are a number of reasons why this might be the case. The first and probably the most likely is that *The Old and the New* is the least dramatic in terms of action and conspicuous conflict of any of Eisenstein’s films. To modern audiences, the struggles of a rural cooperative on the steppes of southern Russia lacks the spectacle that the iconic Odessa steps scene in *Battleship Potemkin* commands

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connections between Eisenstein’s theories of montage, *The Old and the New*, and his work with Marx’s *Capital*. Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein* (Indianapolis: BFI Publishing, 1987), 169.

<sup>12</sup> Leyda, 265.

or the violent struggle for autonomy that the Novgorodians face in *Alexander Nevsky*. In this sense, *The Old and the New* is the most dated of Eisenstein's films because it requires a workable knowledge of the economic history of the time in order to understand and appreciate the significance of the film.

Another major reason why *The Old and the New* lacks the popular following found in the rest of Eisenstein's films is due to the troubling nature of the subject matter. The politics and realization of collectivization in the Soviet Union came at an enormous human cost. The *kulaks*, who are heavily demonized in the film, would be liquidated as a class under Stalin's rule. Though the exact number is unknown, estimates on the total deaths of *kulaks* during the time of collectivization range from the hundred of thousands to millions.<sup>13</sup> These deaths were a part of the larger atrocities committed in the subsequent years following the completion of the film, including the mass famines of 1932-1933 where millions starved to death as a result of Soviet agricultural policy and the Great Purge occurring from 1936 to 1940. When Eisenstein was shooting the film it was impossible for him to know the dark turn that collectivization would ultimately take. Even though the film would premiere three years before the start of the famines and the violent, haphazard nature of full-blown collectivization, the guilt by association, or lack

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<sup>13</sup> There still remains a considerable amount of debate among historians over the scope and total cost in human lives that were a result of the famines. For an in-depth study of the period see Robert Conquest's *The Harvest of Sorrow*. Conquest analyzes all the major events that led up to and eventually caused the wide-scale death and destruction from 1929 to 1932. This includes: *dekulakization*, the dispossession and deportation of million of peasant families, the abolition of private property, and collectivization. Conquest cites the total death toll from this period at 14.5 million. A number larger than the total number dead in the First World War. Robert Conquest, *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror - Famine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 3-10.

of specific historical knowledge on the part of the typical viewer, has made the nature of *The Old and the New* problematic to say the least.<sup>14</sup>

#### **iv. Socialist Realism: A Genre for Building Socialism**

In reevaluating *The Old and the New* as a major cinematic achievement, it is important to address its historical context as well as how it relates to the development of Socialist Realism. At the First Congress of State Writers in 1934, Socialist Realism was declared to be the only acceptable artistic style, whose stated purpose was the representation and advancement of socialism and communism often through the glorification of the working classes through a clearly defined sense of realism. There are four predominant theories about the origins and development of Socialist Realism and how it fits into the cultural context of the First Five-Year Plan. The most common point of view on Socialist Realism in the West during the Cold War was that the Party and the Soviet elites imposed Socialist Realism on the artists and larger society. In this interpretation, the artist merely acts as a tool at the disposal of the Party in their advancement of a dogmatic socialist society. Another interpretation of Socialist Realism comes from Katerina Clark's *The Soviet Novel*. Here, she argues that Socialist Realism was less a narrowly defined doctrine from the upper echelons of the Soviet elites and more an artistic mode that drew upon plot devices similar in nature to folklore. Artists create heroes and legends that play into the national narrative of communism and

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<sup>14</sup> However, as David Bordwell points out, "Eisenstein's *kulaks* get off easily," but even if the *kulaks* are not punished for transgressions against the cooperative, in *The General Line* Eisenstein intended to depict *dekulakization* in its most brutal forms. See David Bordwell, *The Cinema of Eisenstein* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 106.

economic development in much the same way that folklore helped to build national identity around a common ideal. The third common point of view on the establishment of Socialist Realism comes from Evgeny Dobrenko's *The Making of the State Writer*. Dobrenko viewed the Soviet style as a middlebrow genre that developed in response to the aesthetic tastes and expectations of the average Soviet audience. Finally, the art critic, media theorist, and philosopher Boris Groys in *The Total Art of Stalinism* argues that Socialist Realism was the logical conclusion of the avant-garde aesthetics of NEP. Here, the State became the master artist who exercised its control over nature and audience alike, much as the avant-garde of the 1920s hoped to reshape the world through their vision of revolution and a radical break from the aesthetic traditions of pre-revolutionary Russia. Groys argues that Socialist Realism was a continuation of the work the avant-garde began and not a return to traditionalist art like many critics previously argued.

To a certain extent, all four of these ideas pertain to the development of *The Old and the New*. Eisenstein in fact was subject to the censorship of the Party, for Stalin insisted upon edits to *The Old and the New* to make it more in line with state policies. At the same time, Marfa throughout the film functions as a folkloric heroine, a woman of humble origins who overcomes trials and tribulations in order to save her village from the tyranny of the *kulaks*, the devastating drought, and the general belatedness of her village. Furthermore, much can be said in reference to how Eisenstein viewed the role that *The Old and the New* would play in producing distinct reactions in his audience. As I will discuss in my third chapter dealing with Eisenstein's vision of a film version of Marx's *Capital*, Eisenstein endeavored to create an easily accessible way of teaching Marx's

dialectical method to a broad audience. It would be a style that would allow even the most average of Soviet citizens to grasp some of the complexities of Marx's theories. The same can be said for his work on *The Old and the New*, which would have been viewed with a certain level of approachability, in contrast to aspects of his earlier works (such as the "scene of the gods" in *October*) that would have been seen as outside the acumen of the most common of the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, *The Old and the New* occupies a middle ground between the formal and conceptual experimentation of Eisenstein's NEP period montage and the type of Socialist Realism that predominates in his later works. The cream separator scene is very much in line with later Socialist Realist works, but Eisenstein's use of non-diegetic images infuses the scene with a sense of the avant-garde. *The Old and the New* is not a radical break with his previous works but rather a dialectical continuation of the artistic style he began with *Strike*. The avant-garde nature of *The General Line* and its overall experimental use of montage and plot, drawn from the NEP era, did not die when it was recast as *The Old and the New* but rather became one of the pioneering works to prefigure Socialist Realism.

Furthermore, Eisenstein is a unique individual through whom to view the change from NEP to the First Five-Year Plan because he had a long and varied career with two distinct parts: his silent era career during NEP and the early transition to the First Five-Year Plan and his post-NEP abroad career and transition to talkies. *The Old and the New* is both the end of his NEP-era career as well as his first dalliance into the more tightly controlled art world under Stalin. The artistic and creative independence he enjoyed up to and including the original cut of *The General Line* would never again be seen in his

career. *The Old and the New* would begin his struggles with censors and the whims of Stalin himself. For this reason, *The Old and the New* is a fundamental piece of art for understanding not only the economic trends of the period but also Eisenstein's career as a whole.

#### **v. The Dialectic of Art and Economics**

My research on *The Old and the New* incorporates a mix of theoretical disciplines for studying the development of the film. All three chapters incorporate a historical perspective, where I analyze how the changing economic and political landscape shaped the development and context of the film. This approach is especially important in marking the differences between the key plot points of *The General Line* and, later, *The Old and the New*. I also incorporate a social scientific approach in my analysis of the economic development during NEP and the First Five-Year Plan as well as my inclusion of Marx's dialectic and Freud's psychoanalysis in my reading of the film. Finally, I will offer a close reading of *The Old and the New* in my third chapter. Here, I will analyze the way in which Eisenstein incorporates and represents economics throughout his work as well as the way that "ecstasy" is deployed throughout the film.

I gathered information from a number of sources on the economic development of the Soviet Union from the end of War Communism and the beginning of NEP in 1922 to the completion of the First Five-Year Plan in 1932. One key source is the translated work of Polish economist Eugene Zaleski, entitled *Planning for Economic Growth in the Soviet Union, 1918 - 1932*, which was the most comprehensive source for specific Gosplan

policy decisions for NEP and the First Five-Year Plan. His work outlines all the major Soviet economic plans over the time period as well as provides detailed charts and graphs showing aggregate changes in key segments of the economy. A major source for agricultural economic decisions and the nature of Russia's dynamic economic transformations comes from Nicolas Spulber's *Russia's Economic Transitions*. His work clearly shows how policy changes made during NEP differ both functionally and theoretically from the First Five-Year Plan. Another source for the agricultural policy of collectivization is Robert Allen's *Farm to Factory*, which analyzes how Stalin worked to connect the rural agricultural centers to the cities by way of industrial development. Additionally, he examines the economic cost of collectivization and argues that the bloody atrocities of collectivization did little in actually spurring growth. Finally, Simon Johnson and Peter Temin's article, "The Macroeconomics of NEP" was a major source of information on how Gosplan engaged with macroeconomic policy and how it ultimately led to the abandonment of NEP. It was also my key source of information on the "Scissor Crisis" of NEP.

Additional primary source materials that I utilized and referenced in my analysis of *The Old and the New* include Karl Marx's *Capital: Volume I* and *The Communist Manifesto*. As a Marxist, Eisenstein was influenced by Marx's writings and both of Marx's works offer an interpretive lens to view Eisenstein's development of his theories of montage and the thematic contrasts between Eisenstein's original *The General Line* and his reworked *The Old and the New*. I will offer a Marxist reading of the film because Eisenstein consciously responds to *Capital*. In *The Old and the New Eisenstein*



cinematically represents commodity fetishism, and constructs a dialectical method of montage inspired by the Marxist dialectic.

Since Eisenstein is also attempting to reach into the viewers' psyches, I will utilize a psychoanalytical approach for a number of scenes in order to uncover their psychological logic. The source of analysis for this interpretation, specifically the cream separator scene, comes from Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and the Discontents*.<sup>15</sup> His theory of sublimation was a key analytical framework for me to interpret Marfa's moment of ecstasy with the cream and how psychologically it influenced her passion for development.

Unlike the analysis of Leyda, who saw the development of *The Old and the New* as a single artistic work, or Kepley, who divided the film into two distinct production periods, my thesis will interpret the film as three distinct time periods of production, in the three main chapters to follow this introduction. My second chapter will focus on the New Economic Policy and the early work Eisenstein did on *The General Line*, which was originally envisioned as an agricultural companion film to *The Battleship Potemkin*. *The*

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<sup>15</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of Eisenstein's interest in psychoanalysis and how it influenced his work see Masha Salazkina's essay "Addressing the Dialectics of Sexual Difference in Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico*." Many of the psychoanalytic arguments Salazkina makes in reference to *Que Viva Mexico* can also be applied to my own analysis of *The Old and the New*. Salazkina in her essay states, "If Eisenstein's intellectual quest can be presented as a movement towards a synthesis of two opposites, it can also be read as a synthesis of the early 'constructivist Eisenstein' (to borrow Albera's and Bordwell's term) and the later 'organic Eisenstein'. In his later work we witness a synthesis of psychology and physiology through the experience of pathos and exstasis, which provides the necessary shift towards a unified, nondifferentiated state. If the governing metaphor for dialectical montage in the early Eisenstein is collision (or explosion), in later Eisenstein this is replaced by growth and 'coming out of one-another'." Salazkina is referencing parts of Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico* in terms of Pathos and Exstasis, both terms that Eisenstein himself and I use in analyzing the cream separator scene. Additionally, her references to Eisenstein's montage in terms of a dialectical development is a point I expand on in my third chapter that deals with the influence of Marx's *Capital* on Eisenstein theories of montage. Masha Salakina, "Addressing the dialectics of sexual difference in Eisenstein's *Que Viva Mexico*," *Oxford Journals* 48:1 (2007): 45-67.

*General Line* was conceived from the speech Stalin delivered at the Fourteenth Party Congress. Inspired by this speech Eisenstein would explore the implications of a Soviet peasant society dependent on Western imports for development and beholden to the tight grip of the *kulaks*. As *The General Line* was originally envisioned, Eisenstein would delve into the different facets of the mixed-market economy, including private ownership on the part of the *kulaks*, trade with the West, and development of agricultural cooperatives. In Chapter II I will analyze which aspects of NEP policy and culture manifested themselves in this early draft of the film. I will also offer a brief overview of NEP and those sides of the plan that made it a unique period of Soviet economic development. I will contrast specific components of NEP with the original cut of *The General Line*. Additionally, I will look at the way in which *The General Line* relates to the broader aspects of NEP culture.

Chapter III will explore the development of Eisenstein's theories of montage during the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution. As the nation prepared to celebrate a decade of existence, as the first socialist state to exist for that long, many of the greatest artists in the Soviet Union produced commemorative pieces. Eisenstein was not excluded from this endeavor. He would halt production on *The General Line* in order to direct his retelling of the Bolshevik Revolution entitled, *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*. From this work Eisenstein would develop one of his signature artistic methods, intellectual montage. While Eisenstein was first establishing his theories of intellectual montage he was also planning a film version of Karl Marx's *Capital*. In researching and analyzing Marx's *Capital*, I will examine the connection between Marx's

dialectic and Eisenstein's montage. Eisenstein's work on *October*, *Capital*, and his theories of montage would hold major implications for his eventual return to *The General Line*, later renamed *The Old and the New*.

Finally, in Chapter IV, I will offer an in-depth analysis of *The Old and the New*, interpreting many of the economic theories and principles present in the film and how the cinematic language of the film relates to the broader economic trends of the period. What was originally developed as a NEP era film dealing with agricultural development would eventually be recast as a celebratory spectacle dedicated to the First Five-Year Plan and the call for collectivization. As the Soviet economy was transformed, so too was the film, which grew and evolved alongside the new collective agriculture and large-scale industry. What began as a film to answer Stalin's call for a General Line on agricultural policy, would finally premiere in 1929 as the starting point for Stalin's "Year of the Great Break."

## Chapter II: The New Economic Policy and the Search for *the General Line*

### i. Introduction

When Stalin delivered his speech at the Fourteenth Party Congress (December 18-31, 1925), the repercussions would be felt not only in the economic sphere but also in the artistic world. There Stalin would state:

There are two general lines: one comes from the fact that our country has to remain agrarian country for a long time, must export agricultural produce and import equipment, that we have to maintain this position and develop along this line in the future. This line requires essentially the collapse of our industry. This line was expressed recently in Shanin's theses (perhaps someone read them in the "Economic Life"). This line leads to the fact that our country would never, or almost never, realistically industrialize, would have to objectively become an appendage of the general capitalist system and not an economically independent unit based on the domestic market. This line means the abandonment of our construction tasks.

This is not our line.

There is another general line, coming from the fact that we must make every effort to make our country economically self-sufficient, independent, based on the domestic market, a country that will serve as a hearth for attracting to itself all the other countries, that would gradually fall away from capitalism and pour into the mainstream of the socialist economy. This line requires maximum expansion of our industry, but only to the extent and in accordance with the pace of the resources that we have. It emphatically rejects the policy of converting our country into an appendage of the world capitalist system. This is our line of construction to which the party adheres now and in the future. This line is required as long as there is capitalist encirclement.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> “[. . .] Есть две генеральные линии: одна исходит из того, что наша страна должна остаться еще долго страной аграрной, должна вывозить сельскохозяйственные продукты и привозить оборудование, что на этом надо стоять и по этому пути развиваться и впредь. Эта линия требует по сути дела свертывания нашей индустрии. Она получила свое выражение недавно в тезисах Шанина (может быть, кто-либо читал их в “Экономической Жизни”). Эта линия ведет к тому, что наша страна никогда, или почти никогда, не могла бы по-настоящему индустриализироваться, наша страна из экономически самостоятельной единицы, опирающейся на внутренний рынок, должна была бы объективно превратиться в придаток общей капиталистической системы. Эта линия означает отход от задач нашего строительства.

Это не наша линия.

For Stalin there were two clear ways for the Soviet Union to choose between on its path toward development. The first general line was in many ways a continuation of the current path of development under NEP. Russia would remain a largely agrarian state, which would rely on the sale of raw agricultural output to Western powers in exchange for manufacturing equipment and capital goods. In Stalin's view, this plan meant that the Soviet Union would be beholden to the capitalist West for the very goods necessary for its development. This was not the general line Stalin envisioned. There was another general line, though, which focused on the economic independence of the Soviet Union. Here manufacturing and industry would develop alongside agricultural growth. By developing the industrial centers of the Soviet Union Stalin foresaw an economy that would be not an appendage of the West but rather an economically self-sufficient state that would threaten the capitalist hegemony of the world. It was this union of the countryside and the city that would inspire Sergei Eisenstein into action.

The term *The General Line*, taken from Stalin's speech, would become the name of a film that would take Eisenstein close to four years to complete and would span two economic periods. This film, which began as a response to the agricultural changes of the time, represents the tumultuous years of the early Soviet Union. Many of the themes and

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Есть другая генеральная линия, исходящая из того, что мы должны приложить все силы к тому, чтобы сделать нашу страну страной экономически самостоятельной, независимой, базирующейся на внутреннем рынке, страной, которая послужит очагом для притягивания к себе всех других стран, понемногу отпадающих от капитализма и вливающих в русло социалистического хозяйства. Эта линия требует максимального развертывания нашей промышленности, однако в меру и в соответствии с теми ресурсами, которые у нас есть. Она решительно отрицает политику превращения нашей страны в придаток мировой системы капитализма. Это есть наша линия строительства, которой держится партия и которой будет она держаться и впредь. Эта линия обязательна, пока есть капиталистическое окружение." I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniia*, T. 7 (M.: GOSIZDAT politicheskoi literatury, 1952), 298-99.

topics explored in *The General Line* offer visual representations and critical commentary on the successes and failures of NEP.

Eisenstein sought to create a film that would not merely function as entertainment, but one that would have broad political, cultural, and economic effects on the Soviet Union. *The General Line* would not only become Eisenstein's sojourn in the dynamic changes overtaking the agricultural sector of the Soviet economy but also an exploration of Stalin's two "general lines." Over the course of more than four years it took to move the film from conception to premiere, the film would undergo countless re-edits, conceptual changes, and even a subsequent renaming. The adage that life often imitates art proves especially true with *The General Line*, where the only changes more animated than the film were the economic developments transforming the nation. The film became symbolic of the changing landscape of Soviet agriculture over its production as the nation was transformed from the free markets of NEP to the centralized planning of the First Five-Year Plan. Of the many forces that contributed to the formation and eventual completion of the film, the most important are the broad and influential economic policy decisions of Gosplan and the incomparable vision of the director, Sergei Eisenstein.

During the NEP period, Eisenstein produced some of the Soviet Union's most celebrated cinematic achievements, including *Strike* (1925), *The Battleship Potemkin* (1925), *The General Line* (1926), *October* (1928), and *The Old and the New* (1929). His films display a certain dialectical development whereby each subsequent film draws on themes and stylistic choices of his previous works. His first feature film *Strike* depicts a

factory strike in prerevolutionary Russia. Though the workers are unsuccessful in overthrowing the capitalists, the film offers that first revolutionary step in the movement toward socialism. This is followed by *The Battleship Potemkin*, where sailors stage a successful mutiny in 1905 against their abusive commanders. The film offers a transition between *Strike* and *The General Line*. As it was originally conceived, *The General Line* was a modern-day agrarian response to the military revolutionary struggle of *Battleship Potemkin*. It poses two important questions. After the revolution has occurred, what is the next step necessary for the proletarians and the peasants? What new groups and counter revolutionaries will arise that will threaten the future of the revolution?

Eisenstein's background made him a unique choice to direct such a film since he lacked any clear connection to the countryside or agriculture. He was born to a middle-class family in Riga, in the modern-day Latvia. Sergei Eisenstein's father, Mikhail Eisenstein, was of Jewish Swedish descent, and his mother, Julia Konetskaya, was from a Russian Orthodox family. Young Sergei was raised in an Orthodox family but became an atheist later on in life. His childhood was often challenging, for he was abandoned by his mother at a young age and was raised by his father, who is often described as very stern.<sup>17</sup> He did, however, follow in the career path of his father and studied at the Petrograd Institute of Civil Engineering, where he focused on architecture and engineering. Following his service in the Red Army during the Civil War, Eisenstein began his work in the theater and, eventually, transitioned to the film industry. Having

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<sup>17</sup> Ron Briley, "Sergei Eisenstein: The Artist in Service of the Revolution," *The History Teacher* 29:4 (Aug. 1996): 526.

grown up in the urban centers of Riga and Petrograd, he had little exposure to the agrarian lifestyle ubiquitous in the nation. Vance Kepley notes “his thoroughly urban background and training as an engineer would seem to preclude his grasping the nuances of peasant culture, but he was a man of enormous intellectual curiosity. His voluminous reading, and his capacity to do thorough research were his qualifications.”<sup>18</sup>

In order to understand how *The General Line* functions as a NEP era film it is first necessary to examine what aspects of NEP made it distinct as an economic period in Soviet history. The focus that NEP placed on free markets and decentralized development uniquely manifests itself in this original version of *The General Line*.

## ii. From War Communism to NEP

Following the devastation of the Great War, the Revolution, and the ensuing Civil War (1918-1921), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and the leaders of The State Planning Commission (Gosplan)<sup>19</sup> sought a road to development that would correct the failures of War Communism, rebuild the nation after the wars, and create an environment conducive to the eventual creation of socialism. Under the Supreme Economic Council (VSNKh, or Vesenkha)<sup>20</sup> and the leadership of Leon Trotsky, People’s Commissar of Military and

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<sup>18</sup> Vance Kepley, Jr., “The Evolution of Eisenstein’s ‘Old and New,’” *Cinema Journal* 14:1 (Autumn, 1974): 37.

<sup>19</sup> State Planning Committee (Государственный комитет по планированию) was founded in 1921 and tasked with the planning and steering of the economy. In later years, it was the main organization responsible for the development of the First Five-Year Plan. Martin McCauley, *The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union* (Harlow England: Longman, 2008), 482.

<sup>20</sup> The Supreme Soviet of the National Economy (Высший совет народного хозяйства, ВСНХ “Vesenkha”) formed on December 15, 1917 was the superior state institution for the management of the



Naval Affairs, the Soviet Union underwent a period of centralized economic control. Trotsky and the Council used the nationalization of all industry and centralized management, along with State control over trade, and grain requisitioning (*Prodrazvyorstka*)<sup>21</sup> to strengthen the fledgling Soviet State and provide necessary agricultural and industrial goods for the war effort. The eventual end to the Russian Civil War in 1921 became the undoing of War Communism. There was a need for post-war reconstruction and the redevelopment of Soviet industry. Lenin and the Gosplan decided that a change in policy was necessary for the nation to survive long-term.

For this reason the New Economic Policy (NEP) was implemented as a way to make the jump from the mostly feudal nature of the Russian economy to the ultimate goal of a socialist state. What would eventually prepare this path toward socialism was a mixed economy that used both state and privately owned enterprises. Eugene Zaleski, in his study of the early Soviet economy, notes that “the mixed nature of that economy, Lenin claimed, was due not only to the juxtaposition of socialist and capitalist elements, but also to the existence of small, one-person enterprises represented mostly by peasant farming.”<sup>22</sup> The policies of NEP focused mainly on the economic areas of private property, markets and trade, and money. NEP policy would attempt to revitalize the Soviet economy by expanding private property ownership, small-scale manufacturing,

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economy of the Soviet Union. It was subordinate to Sovnarkom and mainly focused on the management and supervision of newly nationalized industries. McCauley, 489.

<sup>21</sup>*Prodrazvyorstka* (продразвёрстка) was a policy in which the state confiscated the agricultural surplus from the peasantry for redistribution amongst the population. James White, *Lenin: The Practice and theory of Revolution*. (New York: Plagrave, 2001), 249.

<sup>22</sup> Eugene Zaleski, *Planning for Economic Growth in the Soviet Union, 1918-1932* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 20.

trade, and retaining the traditional farming system found under pre-revolutionary Russia but with an expansion of collective farms. On the large scale Gosplan would look to regulate and develop the so called “commanding heights” of the economy, namely large-scale industry, transportation, collective agriculture, the electrification of the Soviet Union, and the development of the Ural-Kuznetsk region.

The Soviet Union embarked on a path of industrialization that was tumultuous and uneven at points, but it sought to take aspects of private capitalism, merged with governmental control over key sectors of the economy. This is the major difference between NEP and War Communism. NEP was willing to make use of private capitalist industry (when necessary) to further the movement toward a socialist state. Lenin was willing to act pragmatically if it would further his end goal of a developed socialist state. At the Eleventh Party Congress in March 1922, he argued, “the idea of building communism with communist hands is childish, completely childish. Communists are only a drop in the seas, a drop in the sea of people [...] We can direct the economy if communists can build it with bourgeois hands while learning from this bourgeoisie and directing it down the road we want it to follow.”<sup>23</sup> This process began in March 1921 with a reworking of trade policy by the Tenth Party Congress that allowed for free trade within set economic boundaries. This policy was subsequently ineffective in preventing the swelling of trade by economic middlemen. For this reason, Council of People's

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<sup>23</sup> Allen Ball, *Russia's Last Capitalist: The Nepmen, 1921-1929* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 19.

Commissars (*Sovnakom*)<sup>24</sup> passed a decree on May 28th that “permitted not only the free sale of surplus food by peasants but also trade by other citizens of goods produced by small-scale private manufacturers.”<sup>25</sup> This would prove to be a watershed moment for NEP, leading to the restoration of private property and businesses that employed fewer than twenty persons on December 1, 1921.

With the opening up of trade policy and the redevelopment of private industry in the Soviet Union came two major advancements. The changes in economic policy allowed for new classes to develop in the urban centers and the rural regions. The Nepmen were small-scale traders and producers who thrived upon the independence that NEP offered them. On discussing the origin of the name Lenin remarked, “this word [Nepman] first appeared in journalese as a joking name for the small trader or person using free trade for all sorts of abuses.”<sup>26</sup> If the Nepmen represented the so called exploiters of the cities, then the kulaks, whose name means tight-fists, were the richest of the new peasant classes and thus were viewed as the new agricultural exploitative class.

Since the end of War Communism, Gosplan and the Soviet power structure had been willing to tolerate private industry and limited restrictions on agriculture because it offered a quick and productive road to recovery. Gosplan replaced the seizure of agricultural products with a food tax to incentivize increased production. Nicolas

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<sup>24</sup> The Council of People’s Commissars (Совет народных комиссаров or Совнарком) was an institution formed after the October Revolution and functioned as the highest governmental authority of executive power in the Soviet Union. In 1946 it was transformed into the Council of Ministers. Boim, 120.

<sup>25</sup> Ball, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 127.

Spulber, in his study of Russia's economic transitions over the past century, notes that "during NEP, a whole system of measures aimed at giving full support to the poor peasants, organizing various forms of cooperation with the middle peasants, and restricting the growth of the rich (kulak) peasant households."<sup>27</sup> Under this policy harvests were able to rebound and economic growth was stimulated, but it was not until 1926 that harvest grain crops would reach their pre-revolutionary levels set in 1913.

The mixed-economy framework of NEP proved effective in increasing production and reconstruction following the war, but the plan was not without its flaws. In 1923 the economy faced its first major crisis, one that would traumatize the Bolsheviks. It led to changes in economic planning, monetary policy, and eventually the push for the development of a "General Line" for agricultural policy. The Scissor Crisis struck in early 1923, which caused a widening gap between manufacturing and agricultural prices. The crisis led to rapid increases in the price of manufacturing goods relative to agricultural ones and threatened to dramatically reduce the amount of grain supplied to urban consumers. This issue was compounded by the hyperinflation striking the economy at the time. For this reason, "the most significant re-evaluation of the role of markets took place in 1923, before the end of hyperinflation. In December 1923 the working group known as the 'scissors committee' recommended the regulation of wholesale prices and the control of selected retail prices."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Nicolas Spulber, *Russia's Economic Transition: From Tsarism to the New Millennium* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 193.

<sup>28</sup> Simon Johnson and Peter Temin, "The Economic History of NEP," *The Economic History Review* 46:4 (Nov., 1993): 753.

The effect of the Scissor Crisis was far reaching. It led to restrictions and changes not only in monetary policy and trade, but it also coincided with the unveiling of five-year development plans focused on transportation, manufacturing, and agriculture. These plans represent the more active role Gosplan and the Soviet leadership were willing to take in the Soviet economy following the economic crisis.

The bigger issue to be revealed by the Scissor Crisis was the dependence of the Soviet economy on the rural peasantry, who had changed little since their emancipation from serfdom in 1861. Any plan to advance the country and work to complete the designed purpose of NEP (i.e. the economic development of the Soviet Union) would require an agriculture plan encompassing not only economic change but also political and societal change to match.

### **iii. *The General Line* as a NEP Film**

Beginning in May 1926, Eisenstein and Grigori Aleksandrov (1903-1989) began work on their script for an agricultural film. In order to properly research the topic, Eisenstein and his crew embarked on a two-month research expedition to traditional villages. This practice of immersion into one's subject matter was commonplace in the early Soviet Union. Artists throughout the country would travel to major centers of construction, collective agriculture, and production to fully integrate themselves into the process and to better fuse proletarian and agrarian life into art and culture.

This was especially the case for Eisenstein who would embark on a major research trip through the Russian countryside in order to find inspiration and gather materials for *The General Line*. On this point Eisenstein biographer Yon Barna states:

With characteristic enthusiasm, and after the usual massive documentary research, he set off with his team to tour the villages of the Moscow region. Even village gossip was grist to his mill; and so thorough were these ‘field studies’ - lasting several months - that there were jokes about the film people belonging to the Agricultural and Forestry Workers’ rather than the Artists’ Union.<sup>29</sup>

These “field studies” for Eisenstein would become the main source of material for his development of the film. This would result in a complete first draft on May 23, 1926, which would be approved by Sovkino, the Soviet film company producing *The General Line*, on June 30, 1926. The terms of the contract that Eisenstein signed agreed to a shooting schedule from October 1, 1926 to February 1, 1927.<sup>30</sup>

The key images and themes of the original draft of *The General Line* incorporated many of the policies and economic trends present in Soviet development at the time. The original draft of the film was much different than the final cut, which was released in 1929 under the title *The Old and the New*, or even the forty-five minute 1927 cut. Eisenstein envisioned *The General Line* as the agricultural continuation of *The Battleship Potemkin*. The revolution was no longer needed on the steps of Odessa but rather on the steppes of south of Rostov-on-Don!

The way in which Eisenstein approached filmmaking at this stage of his development speaks to many of the propagandistic objectives he sought to achieve with

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<sup>29</sup> Barna, 116.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix I: “Timeline of the Development of *The Old and the New*” for full outline of events that went into the production of *The General Line* and *The Old and the New*.

*The General Line*. Though his theory of filmmaking would develop over his long career, it is his article, “The Montage of Attractions,” that would most shape the early draft of this film. When Eisenstein published this article on November 3, 1923, he was drawing upon his early work in the theatre. Much of the language he uses has a theatrical flare to it, but it is from this early programmatic essay that he began the conceptual development of his theory of montage. Eisenstein states:

The basic materials of the theatre arise from the spectator himself - and from our guiding of the spectator into a desired direction (or a desired mood), which is the main task of every functional theatre (agit, posters, health education, etc.). The weapons for this purpose are to be found in all the left-over apparatus of the theatre.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, montage for Eisenstein was a political tool to be used in shaping the hearts and minds of the audience. The power of film’s message rests in the hands of the director, who can shape the perception of the viewer through the various uses (or “attractions”) of montage. During the NEP period when Eisenstein was publishing articles on the role of montage in *LEF*, he was looking toward ways to shape the perception of the audience.

Much like the brutal crushing of the workers uprising juxtaposed with the slaughtering of livestock at the end of *Strike* or the iconic Odessa steps sequence in *Battleship Potemkin*, Eisenstein’s films during NEP were built around unforgettable spectacle. He would construct scenes of a massive scale and heighten the tension through the juxtaposition of often non-diegetic images of very explicit content. This is especially

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<sup>31</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form and Film Sense*, Trans. by Jay Leyda (New York: Meridian Books, 1968), 230.

true in *Strike*, where the brutal breaking of the workers' uprising is shown alongside the gory butchering of cows. Through this use of montage Eisenstein causes a strong, primordial reaction from the audience. These attractions give the films a grandiose sense of scale, which works to shape the opinions of the audience.

It is for this reason that Eisenstein began *The General Line* with a sense of class conflict of truly global proportions. The tension between the kulaks and the peasants is palpable at the start of the film with the opening title card stating, "120 million peasants - and ... a few thousand landowners. MUCH land to the landowners - LITTLE to the peasant. Such cannot exist."<sup>32</sup> A Marxist social revolution is ready to erupt, pitting the exploited peasants against their oppressors. The tension eventually boils over when the peasants stage a full-scale assault on the Kulaks' estate where, "the guns of the landowners tremble nervously. The enemy freezes, staring eye to eye. Hatred to hatred. A light breeze blows open the door. The landowner shudders. The peasants don't falter."<sup>33</sup> The scene is taken from an original draft of *1905*, which would eventually evolve into *Battleship Potemkin*. This scene, however, would not appear in the final cut of *Battleship Potemkin*, but instead would be put aside and reused in *The General Line*.

Eisenstein sought a way to represent the radical transformation of the countryside under NEP. For this reason he highlights many of the specific policy choices that made NEP unique as an economic period. One of the most overt is that of foreign trade for products that are used to benefit the collective. The original cut of the film showed the

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<sup>32</sup> Kepley, 41.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



Soviets importing flies from Texas as a way to improve breeding techniques and the overall output of the land. On this topic at the Seventh Moscow Gubernia Party Conference in October Lenin remarked that, “through commodity exchange we could achieve a more direct transition to socialist construction. But now we clearly see that we will have to follow a more roundabout path – through trade.”<sup>34</sup> The flies are not the only import; as Kepley points out, “an even more important American import central to the scenario is a Fordson tractor. [...] When the tractor arrives, the peasants celebrate “Fordzosh” [Fordification], and the ‘Fordson stands like a monument.’”<sup>35</sup>

Foreign trade was essential for the development of the Soviet Union, especially in the field of agriculture, and Eisenstein was not mistaken in underscoring the importance that Henry Ford played in the future of agricultural development. Ford and his techniques of mass production became not only a model to mimic but also a major source of tractors during the early Soviet Union. Kepley notes, “before industrialization under the First Five-Year Plan, the U.S.S.R imported nearly all of their trucks and tractors. In 1927 eighty percent of these came from the Ford Motor Company. Of 5,700 tractors in the Ukraine, 5,520 were Fordsons. The name was so magical that the process of mass production was referred to as “Fordizatsia.”<sup>36</sup> Mechanization of the rural regions of the Soviet Union was another major theme present throughout *The General Line*.

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<sup>34</sup> Ball, 17.

<sup>35</sup> Kepley, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

The most famous images of agricultural development come in the form of the most inconspicuous of farm machines, the cream separator. The reverence that Eisenstein bestowed upon the cream separator makes it a seminal moment in the film; one that was retained even after the film was re-edited to become *The Old and the New*. On this topic Kopley quips that “the success of the cream separator is as significant to the cause of revolution as the rebellion of a naval fleet.”<sup>37</sup> The cream separator would come to represent the possibilities that collective agriculture could ensure. The focus of NEP was on creating agricultural units that would be able to compete with private farms and the landowning *kulaks*. Industrial development and an increase in efficiency was one way of accomplishing such a task.

The cream separator, however, was not just an image of the possibilities of the agricultural future of the Soviet Union, but an object capable of evoking pathos for productive possibility. In 1929, Eisenstein wrote to Jean Mitry, the French theorist, critic and filmmaker, that “it is possible to express pathos through movement, through flight, through the epic breath [he told me] only when there is a sudden upsurge of all passions directed toward a single goal.”<sup>38</sup> This great cathartic moment in *The General Line* was found in the possibility that the cream separator represented. The cream separator offers economic development for the peasants and the possibility to counter the productivity of the *kulaks*. In this scene, Eisenstein’s montage juxtaposes the circular movement of the milk in the separator with images of the Volkhov Hydroelectric Dam. The dynamic flow

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<sup>37</sup> Kopley, 42.

<sup>38</sup> Moussinac, 32.

of cream from the separator is cut with images of the rapid spillways of the Volkhov Dam. This not only highlights the power of the cream separator as an industrializing force for the peasants, but it also places it into the larger context of electrification of the Soviet Union and the Five-Year Plan for development of industry and agriculture. The images of the Volkhov Dam are shown with an almost circular flow of water, which mimics the cylindrical nature of the separator. The circular movement that connects these images is a visual motif throughout *The General Line*, and like the spinning wheel of a tractor, is often shown to represent the forward movement of industry.

This emotional response, though, is tailored to a specifically Soviet audience living under the struggle and opportunity that NEP held. On this point Eisenstein remarked:

Of course, this film is intended first of all for Russians. What does a cream separator mean to you Frenchmen? Nothing more than what it is. What does a radio mean? An agreeable amusement. But imagine what it *could* mean to a man alone, lost on a Pacific island. Imagine what a piece of bread can mean to a hungry man. All his wishes, all his needs, all his hopes become concrete around this one material thing. That's what this cream separator meant for Russian peasants just after the Revolution. It is not its existence as an object which is important, it is what it represents, what it means, what it implies: a moment in peasant consciousness, the total overthrow of the conditions of existence, the transformation of the ancestral way of life. That's what I want to show.<sup>39</sup>

The cream separator is indicative of the larger impact that NEP had on Soviet society.

The machine is the summation of peasant desires for advancement. Where in the French newspaper *Le Mois*' review of the film saw the cream separator as an object of sensual desire Eisenstein hoped to evoke a multitude of response from a Russian audience. The

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<sup>39</sup> Moussianc, 34-5.

cream separator is not merely a productive tool for Soviet agricultural development, but also a representation of economic independence, a kind of icon to be venerated. All of this is overlaid with the sensual desire on which *Le Mois* commented. The cream separator scene is intended to speak to a Russian audience and evoke a number of reactions through its use of montage. It is for this reason *The General Line* became a hallmark of Soviet depiction of the economic period.

Representation of economics in the original vision of *The General Line* so accurately mirrors the state of the economy during NEP that I developed a circular flow diagram based upon the film itself.<sup>40</sup> The diagram shows the relationship between the various economic players in the original cut of the film and how it serves as a broader representation of the general agricultural relations at the time. Within the central component of the diagram, I show the circular flow of money and labor between the labor market, the individual household (Marfa in the case of the film), the market for goods, and private industry, which is dominated by the *kulaks*. Additionally, I draw connections between the government investments in the village through the infusion of direct investment in the household, shown by the support the agronomist plays in directing the development of the peasants. Furthermore, the essential component of trade, which was a central feature of both NEP and *The General Line*, is featured predominately in the graph. In *The General Line* all the major capital goods that allow for development (i.e. the tractor, cream separator, and grain sorter) come from trade with the West. These goods are procured by the export of agricultural goods in exchange for these capital goods.

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<sup>40</sup> See Circular Flow Diagram “The Old” in Appendix III.

Finally, the role of the bank, shown in the film when Marfa visits the bureaucrats' office to procure a loan, is featured with the flow of loans and deposits between the bureaucrats, the individual household, and the *kulaks*. On a large scale, my ability to develop a circular flow diagram based off of *The General Line*, shows the extent to which Eisenstein was actively representing the complexity of a dynamic economic system.

On a broader level, *The General Line* in its original form, sought to grapple with the class struggle and mixed economy system that came to define NEP. The parallel between the feudal nature of the *kulaks* and the progressive socialist nature of the cooperative underscores this sense of the new overtaking the old. The original cut depicted the cooperative storming of the homes of the *kulaks*, taking for their use the excess possessions of the rich landowners. In the *kulaks*' home they reconvert many of their belongings to benefit the cooperative: "From the sarcophagus they make feeding troughs, from a glass coffin found there they make containers for milk. In the well-lit, large premises of the burial vault the young animals are quartered."<sup>41</sup> Eisenstein equates the *kulak* lifestyle with death, because all of the most lavish of their possessions are tied to the veneration of the deceased through extravagant burials. The peasants are able to readapt these symbols of death and waste to better serve the cooperative, thus creating life and productivity. In this way, Eisenstein draws parallels between the misappropriation and decay that is found in the hands of the *kulaks*, and the perceived injustice that the NEP system has wrought. This reflects the duality of NEP as a whole. The Soviet Union viewed the very engine of economic agricultural growth as an

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<sup>41</sup> Kepley, 42.

exploitative class which, Stalin would eventually go on to liquidate. The *kulaks* and NEPmen would face their demise starting in 1927 with the announcement of the centralized Five-Year Plan. Much of what was filmed and originally conceived for *The General Line* would need to be re-shot and edited to fit the changing landscape of economic development.

#### **iv. Conclusion**

In January 1927 Sovkino ordered Eisenstein to halt production of *The General Line* in order to focus on producing a tenth-anniversary film to honor the October Revolution. During that time period Eisenstein would go on to adapt John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* into *October*, which would premiere on January 20, 1928. He would also work on a film adaptation of Karl Marx's *Capital* and develop his theory of montage. 1927 was a prolific year for Eisenstein; it would transform his theories on film, which would be mirrored by the economic revolution overtaking the country, as the NEP was declared successful in building capitalism. This would allow for the creation of a new, centralized development plan to create a socialist state that would redefine the Soviet Union. The economic transition is reflected in what Eisenstein would eventually undertake when *The General Line* would be reconceived as *The Old and The New*.

### Chapter III: The 10th Anniversary of the Revolution and Marx's *Capital*

#### i. Introduction

Even from his earliest works, Eisenstein was pushing the cinematic fold both stylistically and thematically. From *Strike* to *The General Line*, his incorporation of and commenting on Marxian theory would only become more pronounced. For Annette Michelson, the Marxist nature of Eisenstein's work does not merely predate but, in fact, anticipates his desire to create a film version of *Capital*. In her "Reading Eisenstein Reading 'Capital'" she argues:

In 1925 it is *Strike* which embodies Eisenstein's developing vision of a materialistic cinema. This very first film, dealing directly with the dynamics of labor-capital relationship while exploring the cinematic processes themselves in all their variety, must now be read as the direct anticipation of *Capital* developed through *October*.<sup>42</sup>

It would be in the wake of an important anniversary year for the Soviet Union that Eisenstein would finally proclaim what he hoped would be the future of his cinematic career and as a result forever reshape the future of *The General Line*.

In this chapter, I will examine the numerous events that occurred during the break in Eisenstein's production of *The General Line*. First, I will give a brief overview of 1927 as the tenth anniversary of the Soviet Union as well as analyze the film that Eisenstein shot to commemorate this occasion, *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*. Not only was 1927 a major anniversary for the USSR, but it also marked the beginning of the end for NEP. Stalin would unveil at the end of this year the First Five-Year Plan for a

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<sup>42</sup> Michelson, 36.

centrally planned economy. I will connect the discontinuation of NEP and the creation of the First Five-Year Plan not only to *The General Line*, but also to many of his other projects he worked on during this transitional period. One of these projects was his reading of Marx's *Capital* and an attempt to create a film adaption of Marx's most famous work. I will explore what remains of *Capital* and how it is tied into Eisenstein's overall cinematic language for *The General Line* as well as his development of montage theory. Contemporaneous with his work on *October* and *Capital* was Eisenstein's evolution in how he understood and wrote about montage. This would culminate in the publication of many of his most famous articles on montage directly following the completion of *The Old and the New* in 1929. The relationship between all of these events is complicated, but each of them plays a crucial role in our understanding of the evolution of *The Old and the New*.

## **ii. 1927**

1927 was a monumental year in the early history of the Soviet Union. It witnessed the Tenth Anniversary of the October Revolution, when the Bolshevik Party overthrew the provisional government; an anniversary marked by large-scale celebrations and artistic shows of commemoration by many of the greatest artists of the era. Vladimir Mayakovsky would publish his epic poem, "Good!" Vsevolod Pudovkin would direct his most famous work, *The End of St. Petersburg*. Esfir Shub unveiled her documentary based on newsreel footage *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*. Dziga Vertov filmed his work *The Eleventh Year*. The anniversary was also marked by major celebrations in



almost all major cities throughout the Soviet Union as well as a reenactment of major episodes of those fateful days in 1917 Petrograd. Eisenstein suspended his work on *The General Line* in favor of his own commemorative work, *October: Ten Days that Shook the World*, a large-scale retelling of the October Revolution, which would fundamentally shape how most of the world recounts the revolution. This film was not the only major undertaking that the director began during 1927. He also proposed and started working on *Capital*, a film adaption of the first volume of Karl Marx's seminal work. Never before had a socialist state existed for a decade, so the works not only drew on the exuberance of the event but also the uncertainty about the road ahead.

The tenth anniversary of the revolution would not only be a transcendent year in the history of art but also one of radical economic changes. Stalin would go on to abolish the New Economic Policy and install in its place the first of many economic plans, with a scope much larger than the narrowly focused policy of NEP. The Soviet Union would begin to transition from the mixed economy of NEP to the centralized planning of the First Five-Year Plan. This required a shift in the way that the Soviet people viewed the changing winds of economic development. The Soviet authorities would in part turn to the same group that had been called upon to shape the views of the young Soviet State, the artists, filmmakers, and poets. These were the people that Maxim Gorky famously referred to as the "engineers of human souls," a phrase which Stalin would later co-opt.

### iii. The Tenth Anniversary Film that Shook Eisenstein

*October* was built on many of the themes and artistic styles Eisenstein had developed while producing *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin*. The film is a broad and sweeping tale of the October Revolution, which begins with the political unrest stirring in Petrograd during 1917 as war, famine, and political corruption tear away at the fabric of the city. In a mere eight months, Eisenstein was able to capture scenes that represent the scope and scale of the revolution. It also features many of the most famous players in the upheaval, namely Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, and the most powerful of the characters – the citizenry of Petrograd. Just as the slaughter of the bulls intercut with the breaking of the workers uprising in *Strike* or the bloodletting of innocence on the steps of Odessa in *Battleship Potemkin* are the crescendos of Eisenstein's first films, *October* also puts forth a scene of massive unrest. The storming of The Winter Palace is structurally and emotionally the high point of *October*. It is a scene filled with action and high drama as soldiers break through the gilded gates of the palace and wrestle control of the city from the provisional government.

In this way, *October* is expanding on themes and motifs the director had already developed in his earlier works. At the center of all these films is conflict. Jacques

Aumont and Lee Hildreth argue that:

Conflict is, indeed, his master-word during the twenties, and it will continue to haunt all of his subsequent theoretical production...[Eisenstein would state] 'In the realm of art, this dialectical principle of the dynamic is embodied in CONFLICT, as a fundamental, essential principle of the constitution of any work of art and of any kind of art.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Aumont, 57.

In the case of *October*, it is the citizenry and workers of Petrograd against the provisional government and the remnants of the Tsarist system. Conflict is the key feature of much of the film, but it is not the only theme Eisenstein develops in *October*. Elizabeth Henderson, in her writings about Eisenstein's work during 1927 notes that:

*October* marked a turning point in Eisenstein's approach to film art. Its best passages – the raising of the bridges, the sequence of the gods, the dancing – were experimental. Eisenstein was seeking a new level of expressiveness in film which would allow him to convey intellectual messages in highly emotional images.<sup>44</sup>

Eisenstein's earlier works represented a filmmaking style that was concerned with class conflict in the style Marx and Engels outlined in *The Communist Manifesto*. Eisenstein hoped the intellectual seeds he planted throughout *October* would be able to blossom into a new filmmaking language focused not on events but the methodology of its theory. As such, *Capital*, not *The Communist Manifesto*, would be at the center of his theories and practice following the completion of *October*. Eisenstein was striving to reach new heights artistically as the Soviet Union commemorated the ten years that passed and planned for the next five to come.

#### **iv. Eisenstein the Marxist**

For Eisenstein, 1927 was defined by concessions on *The General Line*, the massive film production that went into filming *October*, and his preliminary work on *Capital*. *October* was Eisenstein's evocative sojourn into the birth of the Soviet Union

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<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Henderson, "Majakovskij and Eisenstein Celebrate the Tenth Anniversary," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 22:2 (Summer 1978): 160.

and the early history that shaped the nation. Where Eisenstein saw the possibility of redefining cinema in a fundamental way, many reporters and critics saw a playful comment from a man often known for his eccentricities. Eisenstein took the prospects of filming *Capital* very seriously. To his critics, Eisenstein replied:

The proclamation that I'm going to make a movie of Marx's *Das Kapital* is not a publicity stunt. I believe that the films of the future will be found going in this direction (or else they'll be filming things like *The Idea of Christianity* from the bourgeois point of view!).<sup>45</sup>

The idea of this approach to filmmaking was unique for the time period. It sought to create a new genre of film that was intellectual and deeply complex. This work would challenge the viewer through non-traditional and non-narrative filmmaking. For this reason, it is not surprising that many in the Soviet press would view the suggestion of a film version of Marx's more than 800-page critique of capitalism and the exploitation of labor as all but unfilmable. Even if fate would intervene to prevent the completion of *Capital*, this experiment would continue to shape future writings and films produced by Eisenstein. It was during this time that Eisenstein was developing his theories of montage that would be published directly following the completion of *The Old and The New*. These articles would incorporate much of the work he did not only for *The General Line*, but also for *October* and the never completed *Capital*.

Eisenstein was an extremely meticulous filmmaker; therefore the prospect of filming *Capital* required a considerable amount of theorizing and planning. On this point, Eisenstein would remark that his films "will have to do with philosophy." "It is true," he

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<sup>45</sup> Michelson, 28.

writes, “that I won’t get to this for another year or a year and a half, since the field is absolutely untouched. Tabula rasa. And it will be necessary to do a lot of sketching before trying to treat such an enormous theme without compromising it.”<sup>46</sup> Undertaking such a feat would be a major triumph of film if completed. However, as Eisenstein noted, the subject matter was virgin territory. Translating Karl Marx’s dialectical analysis of *Capital* into the language of film would be a virtually impossible challenge. From Eisenstein’s journals and notes it is clear that he put substantial thought into the possibility of the work, but because only scant amount of specific details and only a single still remains in his archives, much of what can be said of the film is purely speculative.<sup>47</sup>

When investigating *Capital*, it is important to consider how Eisenstein would have approached depicting Marx’s method. Eisenstein would need to develop a cinematic language that could instruct the audience on the dialectical method, which is the cornerstone of Marx’s writing in *Capital*. What Eisenstein envisioned in this film was a genre of filmmaking that was less narrative and more philosophical in nature. On this point, Barna states “he envisioned it as a film about the dialectical method that would

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<sup>46</sup> Michelson, 28.

<sup>47</sup> “The only pictorial research in Eisenstein’s archive for *Kapital* was a picture postcard of the Agha Khan.” Analyzing the image Leyda would write in *Eisenstein at Work*, “On deity: Agha Khan - irreplaceable material - cynicism of shamanism carried to the extreme. God - a graduate of Oxford University. Playing rugby and ping-pong and accepting the prayers of the faithful. And in the background, adding machines click away in ‘divine’ bookkeeping, entering sacrifices and donations. Best exposure of the theme of clergy and cult.” See Image 58 in Appendix II. Jay Leyda and Zina Voynow, 32

raise the cinematographic language embryonically present in *October* into ‘the realms of philosophy.’ In this direction, he believed lay the theme for the film of the future.”<sup>48</sup>

Central to what Eisenstein hoped to achieve with a film adaptation of *Capital* was a deeper understanding and interpretation of Marx’s theory and method. On April 8, 1928 Eisenstein writes: “There are endlessly possible themes for filming in *Capital* (‘price’, ‘income’, ‘rent’) – for us, the theme is Marx’s method.”<sup>49</sup> Eisenstein was as much concerned with how Marx constructs his arguments as the arguments he creates. Marx’s dialectical approach to history and development of capitalism would be central to Eisenstein’s filmmaking; for this reason, Eisenstein would need to develop a cinematic language that would be able to speak in the tongue of Marx’s method.

#### **v. The Dialectical Development of Eisenstein’s Montage**

What specifically about Marx’s method would require Eisenstein’s cinematic language to evolve? When confronted with the possibility of adapting *Capital* to the big screen, Eisenstein found his use of montage inadequate when faced with Marx’s dialectical method. On the one hand, Eisenstein may have seen in Marx’s *Capital* the same dialectical method that he used in his development of montage. On the other hand, the prospect of adapting *Capital* to the silver screen may have provoked a crisis in Eisenstein’s method, forcing him to develop intellectual montage as the technique best suited to adapting such a work. As in most things the truth is often a little bit of both: Eisenstein’s most anthologized writings on montage – such as “The Cinematographic

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<sup>48</sup> Barna, 126.

<sup>49</sup> Sliwowski, 23.

Principle and the Ideogram,” “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form,” “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” and “Methods of Montage” – came after his reading of *Capital*.

There is a clear distinction between the language Eisenstein used in his 1923 writings and his 1929 publications. Eisenstein appears to embrace a more Marxian style of analysis that seeks to find artistic truth through the dialectical weight of his writings. His first published article in *Lef* in 1923, entitled the “Montage of Attractions,” saw montage not merely as an artistic tool to heighten the drama both on the stage and the screen but also as a powerful propagandistic tool. Eisenstein viewed montage as a way to push the individual viewer toward certain emotional responses. It is the director, not the actors, who provides action for the film.

Eisenstein looks toward the attraction, large spectacle and theatrical stunts, as the key to shaping the psychological response of the viewer. Eisenstein defines an attraction as “every aggressive moment in it, i.e., every element of it that brings to light in the spectator those senses or that psychology that influences his experience.”<sup>50</sup> This attempt to create emotional responses in the spectator through psychological techniques would not be limited to theater. Montage of attraction would be an important part of his later works, but it would not hold the significance that his dialectic approach to montage would hold for his subsequent films. As Eisenstein’s career as a director bloomed so too did his conception of montage.

Eisenstein sought a way to draw the psychological logic intrinsic to all humans with the montage of images flashed across the screen. Eisenstein viewed all images as

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<sup>50</sup> Eisenstein, 230.

being endowed with certain inherent meanings that are perceived by the viewer but not always consciously registered. In “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram,” Eisenstein discusses the principle of montage present within the Japanese ideographs, which combine two separate hieroglyphs as a way to create new, higher levels of signification. In this article, Eisenstein looks at how individual characters in Japanese collide to form more complex units of meaning:

a dog + a mouth = “to bark”;  
 a mouth + a child = “to scream”;  
 a mouth + a bird = “to sing”;  
 a knife + a heart = “sorrow,” and so on.  
 But this is - montage!

Yes. It is exactly what we do in the cinema, combining shots that are depictive, single in meaning, neutral in content - into intellectual contexts and series.<sup>51</sup>

This understanding of montage is essential to hypothesizing about Eisenstein's *Capital*.

In *Capital*, Marx used a dialectical approach in which he would juxtapose the materialist development of history with his theories on commodities and labor-power. Like montage, it is not a single concept or critique that builds the basis of Marx’s argument, but rather the collision of smaller units with each other and in the process producing higher meaning, one which is not reducible to its constituent parts. In this way it is synthesis of a thesis and an antithesis. The same is true of the Japanese ideograms. A dog plus a mouth is equal to a bark, but alone these images lack the meaning of their combined weight. In embracing this kind of approach to montage, Eisenstein is moving closer to the theoretical analysis Marx employed in *Capital*.

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<sup>51</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, “The Cinematographic Principle and the Ideogram,” *Film Form and Film Sense: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (Cleveland: The World Publishing Press, 1968), 30.



If Eisenstein were to film *Capital*, montage would have been central to how he could create meaning within the work as well as instruct the broader audience on Marx's method. For example, images of Robinson Crusoe, a representation a free affiliation of laborers, and medieval serfs would be contrasted to the industrial worker who is forced to sell his labor-power to the capitalist. Eisenstein's approach to montage would be the only conceivable way to link the broad theories of Marx together under a single film because Marx's work covers thousands of years of history and hundreds of historical developments. The exploitative forces that shape our world are reduced to mere seconds as time and space is shaped by the hands of the director.

In his article "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," published in April 1929, Eisenstein draws further connections between Marx's writings and his own cinematic vision. He begins the article by stating that "according to Marx and Engels the dialectic system is only the conscious reproduction of the dialectic course (substance) of the external events of the world."<sup>52</sup> The relationship between different events and ideas is central to the interpretation not only of capitalism but, in a larger sense, society and art. The quote from Marx and Engels ties into the larger economic orientation of this article. His very language harkens to a Marxist approach to the interpretation of art and film. Eisenstein goes on to assert, "a dynamic comprehension of things is also basic to the same degree, for a correct understanding of art and all of art-forms. In the realm of the art this dialectic principle of dynamics is embodied in."<sup>53</sup> It is the relationship between

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<sup>52</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," *Film Form and Film Sense: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (Cleveland: The World Publishing Press, 1968), 45.

<sup>53</sup> Eisenstein, "A Dialectical Approach to Film Form," 46.

separate images and the response to those images by the viewer that allows film to take up and investigate the most complex units of meaning.

In fact, Eisenstein uses the dialectic to posit that art itself emerges from the collision of the natural world and economic production. He argues that “the limit of organic form (the passive principle of being) is *Nature*. The limit of rational form (the active principle of production) is *Industry*. At the intersection of Nature and Industry stands *Art*.”<sup>54</sup> Without the rational human interjection into the physical world, art ceases to exist. Any form of art requires human labor to create. This understanding of art bears similarities to Marx’s theory of value, where all value comes not from the good itself, but from the labor that goes into producing that good. In *Capital*, Marx proposes that “all material is an object of labour, but not every object of labour is raw material; the object of labour counts as raw material only when it has already undergone some alteration by means of labour.”<sup>55</sup> It is human labor that separates commodities from the common processes of nature.

The Marxist approach to understanding Eisenstein’s development of montage is also applicable to his essay entitled, “The Filmic Fourth Dimension.” Again Eisenstein builds upon his dialectical approach to montage, which greatly draws upon Marxian theory. This is especially pronounced when Eisenstein discusses the montage style of *The Old and the New*. Eisenstein states

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<sup>54</sup> Eisenstein, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form,” 46.

<sup>55</sup> Marx, Karl. *Capital: Volume One*. New York: Vintage Books, trans. Ben Fowkes (1977), 284.

In distinction from orthodox montage according to particular dominants, *Old and New* was edited differently. In place of an “aristocracy” of individualistic dominants we brought a method of “democratic” equality of rights for all provocations, or stimuli, regarding them as a summary, as a complex.<sup>56</sup>

It is as if Eisenstein is directly drawing upon the language of Marx when he talks about “democratic equality of rights for all provocations.” Eisenstein looks toward a style of montage that is not defined by a dominant image or motif, but rather is comprised of a combination of many images, which together build a meaning greater than the sum of the individual parts. It is the collision and combination of the individual stimuli that create the montage style uniquely found in *The Old and the New*. The montage in mention is what Eisenstein termed “the filmic fourth dimension” – overtone montage. Overtone montage strove to form connections between “the most unexpectedly physiological indications among materials that are logically (both formally and naturally) absolutely neutral in their relations to each other.”<sup>57</sup> This form of montage, which draws upon the style and forms of Japanese Kabuki theatre, look toward shared elements of emotions, sounds, or other senses as the joining force of the style of montage. In finding commonalities in emotional connections between the different shots, that may not share physical or natural characters, Eisenstein was able to construct a sense of overtone. In *The Old and the New* Eisenstein found this linking overtone in ecstasy of the senses.

Eisenstein writes:

It was on the cutting table that I detected the sharply defined scope of the particular montage of *Old and New*. This was when the film had to be

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<sup>56</sup>Eisenstein, “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” 66.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, 68.

condensed and shortened. The “creative ecstasy” attending the assembly and montage – the “creative ecstasy” of “hearing and feeling” the shots – all this was already in the past. Abbreviations and cuts required no inspiration, only technique and skill.<sup>58</sup>

The montage Eisenstein intended for the film was inherently visible to him during the editing process. The sense of “creative ecstasy” and of “‘hearing and feeling’ the shots” is what binds the scenes together through the use of overtone montage.

The “Filmic Fourth Dimension” was one of the last major dialectical steps Eisenstein would take in 1929 while building his theories of montage. The culmination of this work could be found in “Methods of Montage,” where he outlined his five different types of montage: metric, rhythmic, tonal, overtone, and intellectual. Of all the works Eisenstein published in 1929 his “Methods of Montage” is the most coherently articulated of his essays on montage. In this he is dialectically building on his previous writings, “A Dialectical Approach to Film Form,” by more intensely analyzing and categorizing how the collision of two separate images that express ideas can build a higher level of meaning. This is one way in which a connection between Marx’s theories and Eisenstein’s montage can be drawn. Eisenstein’s forms of montage are important to interpreting his work, but understanding intellectual montage is crucial to interpreting the relationship between Eisenstein and economics. Eisenstein defined intellectual montage, as “sounds and overtones of an intellectual sort: i.e., conflict-juxtaposition of accompanying intellectual affects.”<sup>59</sup> Intellectual montage is most clearly exemplified in

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<sup>58</sup> Eisenstein, “The Filmic Fourth Dimension,” 69.

<sup>59</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, “Methods of Montage,” *Film Form and Film Sense: Essays in Film Theory*, trans. Jay Leyda (Cleveland: The World Publishing Press, 1968), 82.

the “scene of the gods” in *October*. Eisenstein used montage as a way to depict the dialectical development of religion beginning with the most modern religion introduced to the broader Russian nation, Russian Orthodoxy, and moving back to the idol worship in pagan society. Each religion is marked by a metonymy. Russian Orthodoxy is shown as a crucifix and the Church of the Savior on Blood. Islam is represented by the oriental dome of the St. Petersburg Mosque. This process continues through Buddhism and eventually the traditional religions of Russia, and Eisenstein ultimately finishes this intellectual scene with the most basic of pagan idols. In tracing religious development through their materialist remnants Eisenstein is not only making a critique on the commonality of all religions, but, also a strong comment on class-consciousness. On this very topic, Eisenstein states that:

An example of this can be found in the sequence of the “gods” in *October*, where all the conditions for their comparison are made dependent on an exclusively class-intellectual sound of each piece in its relation to God. I say class, for though the emotional principle is universally human, the intellectual principle is profoundly tinged by class. These pieces were assembled in accordance with a descending intellectual scale-pulling back the concept of God to its origin, forcing the spectator to perceive this ‘progress’ intellectually.<sup>60</sup>

Eisenstein saw class as the essential feature of understanding the intellectual montage in *October*. Marx viewed religion, like any societal institutions, as defined by the structure of the labor system that formed it. The development of pagan, Orthodox, and Islamic beliefs in the view of Marx reflects the distinct time and culture in which they developed. As Eisenstein wrote in his notes to the film, “the ‘similarity’ of intellectual attractions

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<sup>60</sup> Eisenstein, “Methods of Montage,” 82.

which go into a single piece of montage is not of a sensual kind. That is to say, it's definitely not one of appearance, either. Those fragments 'resemble' each other in terms of conditioned reflexes, i.e., in terms of their meanings: baroque Christ and wooden idol do not resemble each other at all, but they do have the same meaning."<sup>61</sup> It's the deeper meaning that the objects represent for their respective religions that bind them together, not their physical shape or description. They are bound together by a common intellectual argument that a baroque Christ has the same significance for Christianity as a wooden idol holds for pagan beliefs. Through his use of intellectual montage Eisenstein equates all major religious movements in Russia, and by doing so debases the significance society places on religion.

Of all the theories that Eisenstein developed during this period, intellectual montage is the one that bore the most significance for his work on *Capital*. It was the practice best suited to creating an accessible gateway to Marx's theory. "Images ought not to signify ideas," he argues, "but rather to construct and motivate them, the ideas then being generated as logical consequences and not as symbols or ideograms that have already been articulated in the image. Otherwise, montage no longer works, and becomes instead the reproduction of riddles and rebuses."<sup>62</sup> In other words, the work can become incomprehensible without a strong intellectual argument or clearly defined meaning attached to the components of a montage. In order for intellectual montage to work, the viewer must be able to understand the significance of the component parts.

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<sup>61</sup> Silwowski, 12.

<sup>62</sup> Aumont, 147-148.

So much of what Eisenstein based his theories upon is the way in which the viewer psychologically builds meaning between separate images. He wanted to create films that are not simply symbolic of certain ideas and concepts; instead, they ought to radically alter how the audience views and interprets the world. For this reason, his development of the different methods of montage allowed him to organize in a systematic manner, the tools that the filmmaker has at his disposal to contribute to the overall intellectual and ideological meaning of film. Eisenstein insists that “only an intellectual cinema has the power to resolve the dispute between ‘the language of logic’ and ‘the language of images’ - on the basis of a language of cinedialectics...A cinema with the utmost commitment to sensuality as well as investigation, and which draws upon its universal access to channels of action through visual, auditory, and bio-motor stimuli.”<sup>63</sup> Eisenstein uses a Marxist framework as a way to build his argument around intellectual montage. Cinedialectics are a dialectical compilation of “the language of logic” and “the language of images.” Through the use of visual, auditory, and bio-motor stimuli the director can prescribe a deeper meaning not only to the individual images on the screen, but also the broader dialectical meaning of the work as a whole.

Eisenstein’s notes of *Capital* resemble a massive puzzle, where hundreds of pieces are written down in detail, but where there is no overall picture of what the end product would be. Of all the scenes in Eisenstein’s early works the “scene of the gods” is the closest in style and substance to the pure intellectual montage he most likely would have employed in *Capital*. Indeed, on March 8, 1928, Eisenstein writes that “the structure

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<sup>63</sup> Aumont, 159.

of the work which will derive from the methodology of film-word, film-image, film-phrase, as now discovered (after the sequence of ‘the gods’).”<sup>64</sup> Eisenstein’s vision for this new cinematic genre to reshape his art form was a product of the turbulence and personal reflection of 1927. The anniversary celebration, his work on Marx’s *Capital*, and his reconceptualization of his theories of montage would prove to be a transformative period in Eisenstein’s development as a filmmaker.

## vi. Conclusion

As the great artists of the Soviet Union worked on their commemorative works to honor the legacy of the October Revolution, Stalin and Gosplan worked to radically alter the future of the state by exchanging the mixed markets of NEP for the totality of the First Five-Year Plan. Art too would be shaped by this transition. Increasingly, the freedom granted to artists to explore themes in the Soviet Union would be gradually restricted by the state, eventually contributing to the rise of Socialist Realism and the decline and eventual closure of critical artistic journals, such as *Novy Lef*. During this period Eisenstein lamented that, “We aren’t rebels any more. We’re becoming lazy priests. I have the impression that the enormous breadth of 1917 which gave birth to our cinema is blowing itself out.”<sup>65</sup> The avant-garde of the NEP period was slowly being supplanted by what would become the official state style of socialist realism. In many ways, the yearlong reprieve that *October* offered Eisenstein would become the saving grace of *The General Line*. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Eisenstein, refraining

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<sup>64</sup> Sliwowski, 7.

<sup>65</sup> Briley, 529.



from finishing *The General Line* in 1927, saved the film from Sovkino's shelf. The film would have been caught in the cultural and artistic limbo between the end of NEP and the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan. The values and sensibility propagated by *The General Line* would have been out of date with the current economic realities of the time. The artistic styles and genres that flourished under NEP faced increased scrutiny from the state. This was especially true of humor and satire,<sup>66</sup> which were considered dangerous under the tight grip of Stalin.<sup>67</sup> Works deemed more suitable to the new era slowly usurped many of the artists and works that enjoyed a degree of intellectual freedom and cultural relevance during NEP.

Even if *Capital* was never completed its legacy can still be seen in his writings on montage and in the reworked version of *The Old and the New*. Intellectual montage is the closest in spirit and practice Eisenstein would ever get to a purely intellectual kind of filmmaking. His subsequent works would never match the audacity of his plans for

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<sup>66</sup> Il'ia Kalinin, in his article "Laughter as Hard work and Laughter as Commodity," comments on the role that satire and comedy played in Soviet Art, especially during the Stalinist period. He states "As the 1920s became the 1930s, against the background of the political and cultural breakthrough that was currently in train, there also unfolded a discussion on the specifics of Soviet laughter that brought into question the very appropriateness of laughter at a historical-transformative juncture and even of the compatibility between the societal nature of the proletariat and the emotional nature of laughter. One of the central issues in the discussion was that of satire." Satire of all the forms of humor is the most dangerous for an increasingly totalitarian regime. Banal humor that lacks political motive or is satirical toward the capitalist West would be excusable. Even Stalin saw the need for humor in the socialist state he was trying to construct. However his brand of humor was to be a cherry, exuberant art full of laughter and merriment." Of all the art forms to radically change in the interim between NEP and the First Five-Year Plan satirical works were some of the most highly censored. Il'ia Kalinin, "Laughter as Hard Work and Laughter as Hot Commodity: The Stakhanovite Movement and the Capitalist Assembly Line," *Russian Studies in Literature* 50:2 (March 2014): 10,13.

<sup>67</sup> An example of this occurring is found with novelist Yuri Olesha's *Envy*, a biting satire of the economic realities under NEP published in 1927. The novel is now regarded as one of the crowning achievements of Soviet literature, but its circulation and publication became almost nonexistent with the rise of the production novel and the new demands under the First Five-Year Plan. Yuri Olesha. *Envy*. Trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: New York Review of Books, 2004), xi-xiv.

*Capital*. This does not mean, however, that remnants of work cannot be felt in his return to *The General Line*. What was originally conceived as an agricultural response to *The Battleship Potemkin* became the requiem for *Capital*.

## Chapter IV: The Five-Year Plan and the Synthesis of the Old and the New

### i. The Five-Year Plan

Eisenstein would return to *The General Line* in a much different economic climate than the one under which he started the film. As Eisenstein contemplated *Capital* Stalin was casting NEP aside in favor of a new direction. Even from its inception NEP was always viewed as a temporary fix to the economic problems of the fledgling Soviet Union. NEP failed to solve the central issue of Soviet development – how to reconcile the rapidly developing industrial urban centers with the peasant agricultural system that had changed little since the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. Stalin foresaw the need to radically change how the agricultural sector of the economy functioned in order to further the overall development of the nation. On this point, Stalin remarked:

It is possible that, during a more or less prolonged period, the Soviet regime and the building of socialism should rest on two different foundations - the foundation of a socialist industry, which is very big and very united, and the foundation of a socialist industry, which is all cut up, backwards, and has meager surpluses for the retail market? It is therefore necessary 'to increase the size of agricultural enterprises, thus making them capable of greater accumulation and reproduction and thereby transforming the agrarian basis of our national economy.'<sup>68</sup>

It is for this reason that Stalin and the Gosplan would eventually come to advocate for a centralized and all-encompassing plan for Soviet development that would touch all major sectors of the economy. As early as 1926, there was discussion among Gosplan's members on how to best coordinate and enact such a plan as well as how to deal with the disparity between the varying levels of development among the seven Soviet republics

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<sup>68</sup> Zaleski, 71.

currently incorporated into the Union. Gosplan used many of the same centralized planning techniques and styles that were found in the three major Five-Year development plans created during NEP, The Kallinnikov Plan for Industry, the Neopikhanov Plan for Transportation, and the Kondratiev-Oganovksii Plan for Agriculture. These included clearly defined rates of production goals to be systemically achieved over a set time period.

At the time of the drafting of the First Five-Year Plan in 1926, the areas of industry that were showing the fastest growth rates were in producer goods, mainly agricultural machinery, tractors, chemicals, and machine building. The First Five-Year Plan sought to place greater emphasis on those sectors of the economy that would offer the fastest and most profitable return on investment as well as a path to further development. Additionally, the plan looked to create growth rates in such a way as to produce the maximum industrialization of the country and the peasantry. Many of the sectors that the First Five-Year Plan looked to further, such as heavy industry, transportation, and large-scale agricultural development, were a continuation of many of the policies begun during NEP.

The document itself was a massive three-volume, thousand-page text which had been co-authored by G. M. Krzhizhanovskii, G. F. Grinko, E. Kviring, and S. G. Strumilin, and many other specialists in the Soviet government in such broad professions as accounting, engineering, geography, agronomy and geology. Zaleski notes, "The study first covers the economy branch by branch (electric power, industry, agriculture. etc.), then deals with the basic issues (social problems, trade, labor, finances, world economy),

and ends with a documented analysis of individual regions.”<sup>69</sup> Gone is the capitalistic and somewhat haphazard development of NEP. The First Five-Year Plan, though rudimentary in many regards, is a clearly outlined framework for the development of the Soviet Union. In a broader sense, the plan looks at the cost benefit analysis of certain development plans and what would need to be sacrificed in order to achieve long term goals. It also had to be cautious in the way it addressed certain issues, such as the peasantry, which if not handled correctly could not only sink the First Five-Year Plan, but the entire Soviet economy.

One of the major shifts between the policies of NEP and the First Five-Year Plan is how Stalin and the Gosplan intended to develop the agricultural sector. Plans to change the countryside had stalled, and dealing with the rural peasantry who had opposed outright any major form of collectivization or massive development was very difficult. Additionally, the feudal nature of the peasantry was often prone to poor economic planning and behavior that benefited a small segment of the peasantry, as opposed to the idea of the collective. For this reason, the original plan took a cautious approach toward collectivization: “the rural population on collectivized farms (*sovkhozy* and *kolkhozy*) was to be at the end of the period covered by the plan, only 12.9 million out of a total population of about 134 million, and the collectivized sown area was to be 14.5 million hectares out of a total of 136.9 million.”<sup>70</sup> The plan additionally sought to strengthen the relationship between industry and agriculture.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Zaleski, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 60.

For this reason, agricultural policy was possibly the most contentious economic issue of the early Soviet Union. The differing camps and inner struggle amongst the Politburo elites radically altered the fate of the nation and also contributed to Stalin's rise to power. The left wing of the Politburo was headed by Stalin's allies at the time, Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, both of whom believed that in order to create a viable socialist state, the countryside had to be modernized, which entailed the large scale collectivization of farmland. In contrast to the left wing's desire for massive collectivization was the political right, headed by Nikolai Bukharin, Mikhail Tomski, and Alexei Rykov, who saw the eventual need for agricultural modernization but felt for the time being they should continue to support the *kulaks* and encourage individual farming to meet the needs of the cities for grain. The true winner of the debate politically was Stalin himself, who played the competing factions against one another in order to remove rivals and consolidate power. Kepley states:

Stalin decided that it would be necessary to delay collectivization until the Soviet economy was more fully revived under NEP. This also gave him the chance to undermine the positions of the other two triumvirs, who were identified with the left-wing, pro-collectivization faction of the Politburo... When the full Congress met in December [1925], the leftists were denounced by Stalin and it was obvious that collectivization was defeated.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> The strengthening of the relationship between the urban industrial centers and the countryside has its roots in NEP. *Smychka* was the term given to this idea of a greater union between the peasants and the workers. On this point, Lynn Mally in *Revolutionary Acts* comments, "the idea of *smychka*, or union, between the proletariat and the peasantry, two potentially hostile classes, was a central concept of the New Economic Policy. This bedrock principle was extended outside the sphere of economics and class relations to discuss fruitful interaction between other potentially opposing forces." This sense of union between the two groups is especially predominant in the final act of *The Old and the New*. Lynn Mally, *Revolutionary Acts: Amateur Theatre and the Soviet State* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 101.

<sup>72</sup> Kepley, 36.

The political winds of change would not prove advantageous to the right wing of the party either. Serious grain shortages during the winter of 1927-8 threatened the future of the Soviet economy and meant the possibility of destabilizing support in the cities that relied on grain from the countryside. Much of the shortage was blamed on the withholding of grain by the *kulaks*, which provided Stalin with a new political scapegoat and the opportunity to purge the right wing of the party as well. “By the beginning of 1929,” Kepley writes, “Stalin had forced the rightist faction to issue confessions of ideological guilt, and Trotsky had been banished from the Soviet Union. Stalin had triumphed over friend and foe alike.”<sup>73</sup> The political maneuvering on the part of Stalin reshaped the debate and policy enactment that the Soviet Union would embark upon.

On a larger scale, the stifling of political dissent would be mirrored by the desires of the State to further artistic movements that positively contributed to the development of socialism. This became a major driving force behind the development of new art forms and innovations that came to define the pre-war Stalinist Era. The avant-garde had a broad spectrum of opinions and artistic movements, which came to define NEP culturally as the economically and politically diverse era it was. This would be replaced with the rigid and formulaic styles of Socialist Realism and the dominance of the right wing of the arts. Art and culture were dramatically changed, and nowhere is this more evident than in the struggles and triumphs of Eisenstein.

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<sup>73</sup> Kepley, 37.

## ii. *The Old and the New*

Sergei Eisenstein returned to his production of *The General Line* in June of 1928 following the premiere of *October* on January 20, 1928. Eisenstein was entering a radically different artistic landscape than the one he had left little over a year ago. The change in agricultural policy would require a major retooling of his previous work for *The General Line*. Eisenstein was forced to make many substantial changes to face the new economic realities. Barna notes, “Eisenstein himself stated that the film paid for the stoppage ‘with its shattered vertebrae and broken spine’. Of the original conception there remained only the first three reels, and the agitation scene in the second part.”<sup>74</sup>

The ways in which Eisenstein re-edited the film to better reflect the agricultural realities of the period to a great extent speak to the changing rhetoric and policy decisions favored by the Soviet elites. The final creation of *The Old and the New* is as much about what Eisenstein chose to remove from the film as what eventually was flashed upon the silver screen in Moscow on November 7, 1929. For the film to finish production and pass through the censors and Stalin himself, much of the rhetoric and themes of the original cut would need to be altered. The most significant change is the dynamic between the *kulaks* and the peasants. Much of the agitation between the peasantry and the *kulaks* is reduced if not completely removed from the new cut of the film.

There are many possible reasons why Eisenstein may have made this decision. One possibility is that showing the struggle between the *kulaks* and the peasants as a

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<sup>74</sup> Barna, 129.



violent struggle on the scale of *Battleship Potemkin* may have been too overt a message for the time. Stalin had looked to liquidate the *kulaks* as a class and create in their place a thriving network of modern *kolkhozes*. Showing the threat to the *kulaks* in such overt terms could have played poorly amongst segments of the peasantry and could lead to political instability in the countryside, which would have been the last thing Stalin wanted at that time.

The decision to change the tone of the film may have had less to do with political desires from the top but rather with the artistic sensibility of Eisenstein himself. Having finished his production of *October*, Eisenstein deeply considered the prospect of a film version of *Capital*, and his overall development of his theories of montage most likely played a major role in this change. It is as if Eisenstein opted to show the triumph of the peasantry against the *kulaks* not in terms of a class struggle ripped from the pages of *The Communist Manifesto* but rather as a dialectic continuation of Marx's writing in *Capital*. Everything that is achieved in the film comes about through a continuous cycle of development and growth. This causes the film to not only be more complex in how it depicts the realities of the peasantry and development, but it also serves to create a more optimistic tone to the film. The future of the countryside will not be won through destruction and death but rather through fertility, cultivation, and capital investment – all themes that dominate the final cut of *The Old and the New*.

As a companion diagram to the one I developed for *The General Line*, I created a circular flow diagram which is able to not only show the complexity of the agricultural sector during the period of *The Old and the New* but also serves to highlight the

differences between the two periods.<sup>75</sup> In the “New” diagram, there still exists that circular flow of labor and money between the individual household (Marfa), the market for goods, private industry (the *kulaks*), and the labor market. But implanted in this new graph is the engine of change in the new collective economy: the cooperative. Money and goods now flow from the market for goods to the cooperative. Labor and goods flow between the cooperative, and individual households, such as Marfa’s, supply their hard earned rubles in exchange for such desirable goods as freshly produced cream. The relationship between the government and the individual household remains the same, but what is happening between the *kulaks* and the government has changed. Excessive taxation from the government levied against the *kulaks* serves as a disincentive to the class and provides revenue for direct investment into the cooperative.

Where the “Old” diagram featured trade with the West as the major source of capital goods for development, the “New” now shows domestic industry filling the space. This is symbolic not only of the change in the film, which showed the cream separator, grain sorter, and tractor as all domestic products, but is also symbolic of the Soviet policy of *symchka* between the agricultural and industrial sectors. The bureaucracy continues to receive deposits and issue loans to the individual households and private industry, but now they also offer loans to the cooperative and serve as a guardian for the collective surplus the cooperative produces. The circular flow diagram shows how the agricultural sector of the economy was functioning during *The Old and the New*, but development does not merely occur because of economic system. The success of the cooperative

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<sup>75</sup> See the “New” in Appendix III.

would be as much about the dynamics of Soviet agricultural sector as it was about a peasant woman ready to lead the transformation of her old, belated village.

### iii. A Hero Arises

This cut of the film shifts its focus toward a female protagonist, Marfa Lapkina, who seeks to break the backward ways of the rural society through the embracing of collective farming.<sup>76</sup> For the first time in any of his films Eisenstein has a main character. She is also unique in being the only female protagonist in any of Eisenstein's works, raising the question of how femininity and the changing Soviet ideals of women are at work in the film. Marfa is a strong and determined woman willing to work arduous hours in the field in order to achieve prosperity for her community. It is worth noting that Marfa is never shown to have any children, family, or major love interest.<sup>77</sup> Love for Marfa is

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<sup>76</sup> The name Marfa evokes the title heroine of a historical short story written by Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826). In the tale "Martha the Mayoress" ("Marfa Posadnitsa"), published in 1803, the title character of Marfa helps to coordinate the defense of the city-state of Novgorod against the advancing Muscovite forces. Marfa the Mayoress is a symbol of regional autonomy in contrast to the Marfa of *The Old and the New*, who seeks to strengthen the connection between Moscow and the provinces. Even though they have divergent goals, the heroines share a commonality as strong women of a folkloric nature. Marfa organizes the defense of Novgorod, rallies the city toward the goal of freedom and independence, and even marries off her daughter to the new commander of the army. Ultimately, Marfa pays for her patriotism with her life when the city eventually falls to the might of Moscow. What the two heroines share though is a deep love and admiration for their native lands and a willingness to defend it to the end. In naming the protagonist Marfa, Eisenstein is engaging with a folk tradition of strong female figures. Mark Altshuller, "The Transition to the Modern Age: Sentimentalism and Preromanticism, 1790 – 1820," *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*. ed. Charles A. Moser (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 101.

<sup>77</sup> In some regards, Marfa could be viewed as a feminist figure as it was understood at the time. She is strong, independent, and divorced from any familial ties to prevent her from being a productive worker. In many ways she reflects the Soviet ideal that saw woman as both mother and worker. Many critics of the period called for the collectivization of the family. In having one individual take care of the village children instead of 20 individual mothers, there could be more workers in the field and less in the home. Dalla Costa, a Marxian-feminist economist suggests "that women who receive wages for housework would be able to organize their housework collectively, providing community child care, meal preparation, and the like. Demanding wages and having wages would raise their consciousness of the importance of their work; they would see its social significance, as well as its private necessity, a necessary first step toward more

found not in the strong embrace of a muscular Soviet peasant but rather in industrial development and the purchase of capital goods. The story follows many of the common literary and film archetypes at the time, which is not “girl meets boy” but rather “girl meets tractor.” This almost lustful ambition is the driving force of the character and her development throughout *The Old and The New*. The progression of Marfa as a character begins with a woman willing to dedicate her whole life to the betterment of the peasant farms. In this sense, she embodies the ideal Soviet person, who puts the needs of the collective over the individual.

What fundamentally changes Marfa’s life is the arrival of the cream separator and the creation of the Dairy Cooperative, of which she was one of the four original members. The scene that shows her emotional exuberance at the success of the separator runs deeper than simply being her ecstasy that the peasants can now enjoy cream.<sup>78</sup> It is depicted as if Marfa is experiencing an orgasm when seeing and touching the white fountain of freshly condensed cream flowing from the spigot of the separator. As the cream covers her hands and face, she is able to experience sexual satisfaction, on a figurative level, for which she will continuously long for throughout the film. This deep sense of desire she experiences cannot be quenched by human interaction but can only be found in furthering the goals of the collective. In other words, Eisenstein is using strong sexual imagery as a way to increase the desire for collective agricultural

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comprehensive social change.” In collectivizing family life the Soviet Union would be able to grow the size and productivity of the collective. Heidi Hartman, *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards A More Progressive Union*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 8

<sup>78</sup> See Image 20.

development.<sup>79</sup> Marfa's deep passion for the cream separator uses many of the common ploys used in modern advertising – using sexual imagery as a way to sell products or, in this case, capital goods.

#### iv. The Circle and the Line

The most common visual dominants throughout the entire film are that of the circle and the line.<sup>80</sup> The names themselves even allude to this visual motif - the (General) line and the circular dialectical relationship that occurs between the old and the new. The line is often evoked along with images of regression, poverty, decay, and division. The literal sawing of the home in half,<sup>81</sup> the linearity of the peasants plowing the

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<sup>79</sup> In defining Marfa's desire for capital development in terms of sexual satisfaction, Eisenstein is drawing upon psychoanalytical theories first developed by Freud. To displace the suffering and lack of satisfaction Marfa is experiencing personally, she sublimates her sexual desires with her desire for capital goods. Through this sublimation Marfa is able to reach new heights for the collective. On this point, Freud argues that "another technique for fending off suffering is the employment of the displacement of libido which our mental apparatus permits of and through which its function gains so much in flexibility. The task here is that of shifting the instinctual aims in such a way that they cannot come up against frustration from the external world. In this sublimation of the instincts lends its assistance." Marfa's sublimation of sexual desires away from human flesh toward the bright gleam and heavy stream of the cream separator is one of the most powerful motivators of the film. Marfa's desire to reach greater heights stems from this original experience with the separator. The separator is one of the conduits through which she sublimates her libido. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1961), 29.

<sup>80</sup> Rosamund Bartlett in "The Circle and the Line," writes about the symbolic nature of the two leitmotifs in Eisenstein's works. She argues, "The tension between the 'circle' and the 'line' in Eisenstein's work can be understood, therefore, to be between female and male, and between movement and stasis, as well as between regression and progression." Bartlett traces this thematic development to Eisenstein's study of Russian Orthodoxy, which is heavily influenced by icons and symbolic meaning. The circle for Eisenstein represents eternity, reproduction, progression, and femininity. This is the perfect marker for Marfa, who is a synthesis of those component parts. Bartlett's analysis of the circle and line motif does not focus on *The Old and the New*, which of all of Eisenstein's films uses the pattern most overtly as a story telling device. Rosamund Bartlett, "The Circle and the Line: Eisenstein, Floresky, and Russian Orthodoxy." *Eisenstein at 100*. Ed. Al LaValley and Barry P. Scherr (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 73.

<sup>81</sup> See Images 5-6.

fields,<sup>82</sup> and the unsuccessful religious procession for relief from the draught all evoke this linear motif and all signify the toil of the old way.<sup>83</sup> What is unique about the contrasting motifs is that the circle is paired with images indicative of growth, prosperity, and progress. From the wheels of the tractor<sup>84</sup> to the subterfuge of the separator,<sup>85</sup> circles always denote a sense of forward movement and development.

This pattern is unique among Soviet film and representative economic art at the time, which frequently showed forward progress as a line and not a circle. In this way Eisenstein did not view progress as a linear motion, but rather as a dialectical pattern of development. Eisenstein's decision to conjure development in such a way could have many interpretations. The circle can be seen as symbolic of continual growth and development, whereas a line has a definite starting and stopping point. A circle offers continual movement and innovation, which mimics the Soviet Union's goal of communism without end. The circle could also be symbolic of an egg and fertility, which is another dominant theme of the film. In equating the circular progress of the cooperative with the fertility Eisenstein shows development through collective work as something natural and boundless in potential. In other words, over the course of *The Old and the New* Eisenstein anchors a whole series of different associations to these

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<sup>82</sup> See Images 13-14.

<sup>83</sup> See Images 15-16.

<sup>84</sup> See Image 51.

<sup>85</sup> See Image 17.

leitmotifs; therefore, in order to fully analyze these references, I will provide a scene by scene analysis of the film.

#### **v. In an Old, Belated Village**

*The Old and the New* is divided into six parts and totals approximately 200 minutes of film. Following the title card<sup>86</sup> the film begins with a quote from Vladimir Lenin, which states:

... There are conditions under which the formulation of a model of local work, even in the small scale, is more important for the workers than many branches of the central government work.<sup>87</sup>

Even from the beginning Eisenstein is differentiating this film from his previous works. In *The Old and the New*, the central figure is not the masses of a striking factory, a rebellious naval fleet, or the citizens of Petrograd, but a lone heroine. Marfa Lapkina, who through force of will and unbreakable work effort, is able to turn a starving village plagued by backwardness and ignorance into a thriving collective farm. Never before had Eisenstein envisioned a more dynamic character.

The progressive nature of Marfa will be a major point of contrast with the peasantry even from the beginning. Eisenstein underscores the backwardness and illiteracy of the peasantry, of which 100,000,000 live in poverty. Dichotomy, a continuous technique throughout the film, is further underscored at the beginning when

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<sup>86</sup> See Image 1.

<sup>87</sup> “...бывают условия, когда образцовая постановка местной работы, даже в самом небольшом масштабе, имеет более важное государственное значение, чем многие отрасли центральной государственной работы.”

the title card states that this way of life, which is filled with destitute peasants, is the old way. The film proceeds to cut to the barren lands of the East European plain outside of the regional capital of Rostov-on-Don.<sup>88</sup> The old lifestyle of the peasantry is unchanged from the time of their emancipation. Their homes are shown to be in varying states of disrepair and the appearance of the homes is mirrored in their haggard inhabitants. Two brothers are shown literally sawing their home in half.<sup>89</sup> As the saw moves horizontally across the screen, so too does the sun, which divides the land between dark and light, symbolic of the divide between the undeveloped and the developed, the ancient and the modern, in short the old and the new. Additionally, the division of the home is meant to show how division and separation only weakens the peasants. This principle will later be contrasted with the unity and construction found under the new way of the cooperative. Throughout the film, Eisenstein uses this sawing motion to often represent things that are preventing the development of the peasantry and their movement out of poverty toward socialism.

Eisenstein employs intellectual montage to show the lack of cooperation and strife between the family is not the only factor preventing the advancement of agriculture in the Soviet Union. Intercut with images of the saws dividing the house in two is the image of primitive wooden fences that carve up the earth, adulterating the land for the benefit of a

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<sup>88</sup> The location of the reshoots and work Eisenstein did following the completion of *October* is symbolic. Kopley recounts that, “[Eisenstein and Alexandrov] travelled to the collective farm ‘Giant’ near Rostov-on-Don where they shot additional footage.” It is not by chance that Eisenstein chose “Giant”, the massive collective that serves as the standard for collectivization. The steppe had long been a bastion of traditional peoples and cultures, but under the Soviet authority had been rebirthed as the location of one of the largest farms in the world. Kopley, 41.

<sup>89</sup> See Image 3.



few.<sup>90</sup> When the house and the lands are fully divided, the family leaves, driven from their traditional way of life. This theme is further reinforced with the struggles faced by the remaining peasants in plowing their tract. As much as they endeavor to break up the uneven soil of the steppe, their difficulty is only magnified by the lack of a horse to perform the manual labor. At a certain point, it is on the individuals themselves, whether they are young or old, to physically plow the fields.

The title card then states “That is the way farms grow poorer and collapse.”<sup>91</sup> Between cuts of the extremely old and infants, Marfa Lapkina is introduced as “one of many.”<sup>92</sup> Even from her introduction she is marked as unique among the peasants. The way in which Eisenstein frames her within the shot endows her with a sense of intelligence that is not prominent with the other peasants.<sup>93</sup> When the camera first zooms in on her she has a facial expression of deep contemplation unlike the confusion and bewilderment of the other peasants.

Another major theme introduced in the first reel is that of fertility and scarcity. The images of fertility is shown in the clearly pregnant woman,<sup>94</sup> traditionally an image of opportunity, hope, and the future. Scarcity is found in the skeletal appearance of the cow, which is so gaunt from malnutrition that all of its ribs can be counted. The

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<sup>90</sup> See Images 5-6.

<sup>91</sup> “Так беднеют и разоряются хозяйства.”

<sup>92</sup> “Одна из многих.”

<sup>93</sup> See Image 9.

<sup>94</sup> See Image 8.

traditional and antiquated lives of the peasants is often equated with scarcity. As the progress of the cooperative crescendos so too do the images and references to fertility. For Eisenstein, the message of the old way of life being arduous and fraught with death is something that has been toned down from the original cut of the film, which featured death imagery predominantly. The theme is still, however, present in the form of starvation and scarcity.

The struggle of the peasants to work the land forces Marfa to go to the *kulak's* home in order to beg for a draft animal. Even before showing the *kulaks*, Eisenstein's marks their home with saw tooth imagery.<sup>95</sup> All of the decorative wood carving around the edges of the home bear a distinctive saw tooth look that furthers the connection between the *kulak* class and the other forces preventing the development of the cooperative. The *kulaks* are individuals who contribute to the division of the home and the enclosure of the land, which Marfa views as the source of the peasants' pauperism. The *kulak* couple is gargantuan in size, especially in contrast to Marfa and the other peasants facing starvation.<sup>96</sup> A close-up of the enclosed fist of the *kulak* man, which is greedily dunking a ladle into a container of kvas, not only serves to illustrate the selfishness of the *kulaks*, who are gorging while most of the peasants are starving, but this also forms a visual representation of his class, which literally means tight-fisted. The *kulak* wife is as large as her husband and sports outfits much more lavish than the traditional garb of the peasantry, exemplified by the simplicity of Marfa's *sarafan*. In her

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<sup>95</sup> See Image 10.

<sup>96</sup> See Image 11.

hair she places a saw-toothed hair brush, another image of division tied into the excesses of the rich farmers.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, Marfa's appeal for a horse is rejected and she is obligated to return to the village empty handed. Without a horse the peasants are compelled to use dairy cows to blow their fields. In the end, Marfa along with the other peasants are forced to toil alongside the animals as they arduously break the earth.<sup>98</sup>

From this toil and strife Marfa is propelled into action. Standing above the rest of the village on a podium, Marfa protests the abysmal conditions of the peasants and looks towards a path of prosperity. This would require a cooperative, which most of the peasants refuse to participate in and simply snicker at Marfa's suggestion. On the podium, Marfa and a local Soviet agronomist are shown in stark contrast to the rural peasantry. The agronomist is clean shaven and dressed in the style that was common for his rank and position within the party. The peasantry in contrast is very old fashioned in both dress and appearance, wearing traditional Russian clothing and having large unkempt beards.

When the agronomist calls for a dairy cooperative to better the living situation of the peasants, Marfa is the only person shown to support the endeavor. From the standpoint of Marfa, the traditional views and ways of working are preventing opportunity for growth and development. The contrast between the old world and the new is widened in the following two scenes. Eisenstein contrasts the exuberance shown in the subsequent religious procession scene with the outpouring of emotion when the cream

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<sup>97</sup> See Image 12.

<sup>98</sup> See Image 13.

separator is shown to produce its first canister of cream. These two scenes are some of the most iconic and critiqued aspects of the film.

The religious procession, organized in response to the drought, which further cripples the lives of the peasants, comes off as a massive ceremony, full of pomp. Eisenstein draws attention to the decorous nature of the priests' vestibules<sup>99</sup> and the gilded icons, which are the antithesis to the wretched appearance of the peasants. A peasant man is shown to be crippled, with one leg stretched forward as the other is placed across his extended leg. His movement across the screen as he drags himself along, with the other parishioners, mimics the movement of the plow in the earlier scene.<sup>100</sup> The antiquated and crippled nature of the traditional, or old style of agriculture is equated to the labored movements of the paralyzed peasant. In this scene, Eisenstein was drawing upon the cultural revolution reshaping the Soviet Union at the time. Increasingly churchgoers and the faithful were being placed under persecution from the State. Even as throngs of religious faithful pray and chant for the end of the drought the land remains arid, Eisenstein bitterly satirizes the processions as a useless outpouring of emotion. The end of suffering will be not found in the ritualistic chanting of priests or from dripping candle wax, but from the intense eruption of cream from a brightly shone cream separator.

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<sup>99</sup> See Image 16.

<sup>100</sup> See Image 15.

## vi. The Pathos of the Separator

The cream separator scene is the most iconic section of the film and is the film's most highly analyzed and debated segment. In his biography on Eisenstein Norman Swallow remarked:

Eisenstein used a cream-separator as the symbol of new mechanical age [...] Inevitably the cream appears and as the first drops become larger and larger until the whole world seems to be drowned in the thick white liquid, Eisenstein intercuts the machine and its cream with the faces of the peasants – all of them non-actors – as their reactions change from skepticism to absolute joy. It is one of the most lyrical passages in the whole of Eisenstein's work, totally successful both as propaganda and as a human poem.<sup>101</sup>

Where the ecstasy of the religious procession failed, the peasants are able to find relief as well as a cathartic experience in the success of the separator. What begins as a slow drip from the spigot of the machine is transformed into an eruption of cream intercut with images of powerful fountains of water and massive hydroelectric dams. The expressions of the peasants as the milk slowly begin to condense changes from disbelief to elation. The separator is not the deception that most people assume it to be but rather a massive advancement for the village. No character is more overjoyed by the success of the machine than our female protagonist. Marfa is overcome with enthusiasm as her face is covered in cream, and the dairy cooperative is proven to be a success.

The scene itself creates a form of sexual imagery that arouses the orgasmic response that is mirrored in Marfa's elation at the condensation of the milk. Marfa's joy

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<sup>101</sup> Norman Swallow, *Eisenstein: A Documentary Portrait* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1977), 68.

in the face of the cream separator will motivate her toward purchases of other capital goods that will better the lives of the peasants. The cream separator scene also evokes the fertility imagery that is present throughout the film. Marfa is figuratively impregnated with the desire to further the development of the cooperative through the purchase of capital goods. Additionally, the scene serves as a place of comic relief in the film. Eisenstein elicits from the audience and the peasants a comedic response to the cream separator scene that is dripping in sexual imagery. It is as if Eisenstein is challenging the contemporary reviewers to put into words the images they saw flashing across the scene.<sup>102</sup>

With this success comes the expansion of the cooperative by uneven intervals flashed in massive letters across the screen. From four to fifty the size of the cooperative explodes on the screen. This gamble though was not without its risks. Eisenstein heightens the uncertainty of the film by intercutting a spinning roulette<sup>103</sup> with the circular movement of the machine. Progress and growth as it is depicted in the film is almost always reflected in circular movements. Nowhere is this more evident than the reaction that the circular separator receives in contrast to the failure of the linear movements of the processions to relieve the peasants from the draught.

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<sup>102</sup>Kalinin makes many points that relate to Eisenstein's use of comedy. "The class-based vitality, the societal optimism, and the chorus of collective laughter through which the new epoch aspired to represent itself could not have discovered an appropriate form of expression in satire. The new life-affirming laughter was simultaneously supposed to rest on the national tradition...and provide it with a class-based overhaul." The scene itself is extremely progressive in its use of sexuality for comedic effects as well as class-based in how it produces laughs from the developmental success of the collective. Like the montage styles that Eisenstein had been developing since his earliest work in the theatre and *Strike* this scene using the combination of economic development, orgasmic exuberance, and the class-based success of the cooperative as a scene of both laughter and awe at the success of the separator. Kalinin, 13-14.

<sup>103</sup> See Image 18.

The economic success of the dairy cooperative allows for the purchase of a well-bred bull, to strengthen the output of the cooperative. When many in the community try to use these funds that should go toward the cooperative for their personal betterment, Marfa is forced to intervene. It is her strength of will that is able to sway the village to abandon their individual mindset in favor of cooperative thinking. Before they go to purchase the bull, Marfa, asleep atop their profits, dreams of thousands of bovines overtaking the countryside and a massive bull rising up from this collective of cows.<sup>104</sup> With these cows, milk proceeds to rain down from the heavens. Large-scale production is shown to be in full swing as milk is transformed into cream and then bottles are filled to the brim and sold. For Marfa, the success of the collective and prosperity are well within the villages' grasp.

### **vii. Eisenstein Defetishizes the Commodity**

The production process is featured predominately throughout *The Old and the New*, where many of the scenes actively draw upon Eisenstein reading of *Capital*. It is in the first chapter of *Capital*, entitled "The Commodity," that Marx addresses how consumers tend to view a commodity not as a summation of the labor that went into producing the good but rather as an object distinct from the labor process. Marx contends:

The commodity-form, and the value relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material [*dinglich*] relations arising out

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<sup>104</sup> See Image 21.

of it [...] I call this the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour as soon as they are produced as commodities, and is therefore inseparable from the production of the commodity.<sup>105</sup>

The commodity is able to transcend the process of production and becomes an object of desire rather than a realization of labor. Eisenstein actively challenges this dilemma by reinserting the labor process into the consumption of the commodities. Eisenstein wants the viewer to actively see how goods are produced and consciously understand the role labor plays in the production of any economic system, especially the formation of socialism.

The issue of commodity fetishism becomes apparent at the collective where they eventually purchase the bull. Eisenstein proceeds through images of suckling pigs and newly hatched chicks, which serve both as images of fertility as well as the natural resources for the production cycle. These animals are healthy and well nourished, which is in stark contrast to the emaciated animals from the first reel of the film. Everywhere there is a sense of fertility and prosperity, all things that collectivization promised the peasants. Images of pigs swimming through a river are intercut with the mechanized butcher process. The spinning blades that clean the hides of the pigs again are a circular mark of progress.<sup>106</sup> The camera continues to pan across the screen as the pig is cleaned, cooked and butchered.<sup>107</sup> Intercut into these images of pigs being stripped of their flesh and prepared for butchering a non-diegetic image of a porcelain pig pirouettes on the

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<sup>105</sup> Marx, 165.

<sup>106</sup> Image 25.

<sup>107</sup> Images 23-24.



screen.<sup>108</sup> The cold, hard exterior of the porcelain pig is juxtaposed to the pig as it enters into the steaming furnace. The porcelain pig is everything the butchered pig is not. It is shown with a dress and bow, gleefully smiling as it effortlessly spins. It is the ultimate commodity, something that is sensuous, and devoid of use-value beyond the aesthetic. It's a non-diegetic image, which unexpectedly appears, and then immediately vanished. The porcelain pig is fetishized and lacking any apparent production history, which contrasts to the butchered pig. Eisenstein is able to defetishize the commodity by showing the production process of pork from birth to butchering.<sup>109</sup> After his reading of *Capital*, Eisenstein is actively bringing the labor theory of value to the forefront of film. The labor of the worker can now be visually depicted and disseminated to the masses. The scene provides an easily understood interpretation of Marx's theory, which helps to bring the complexity of macro economics to the individual viewer.

The collective is shown to be extremely modern and efficient in comparison to the traditional village. All of the architecture is avant-garde and permanent in contrast to the crumbling huts in the village. This farmers' paradise at first seems too fantastical to be real.<sup>110</sup> The title card even addresses the audience asking if "you think this might be a

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<sup>108</sup> See Image 26.

<sup>109</sup> This desire to defetishize the commodity and draw a deeper connection between industry and the consumer is not unique to Eisenstein. Vladimir Mayakovsky's *My Discovery of America*, his own sojourn through the Americas in 1926, recounts his impressions of the Chicago stockyards. In it he writes, "Chicago is not ashamed of its factories...There is no surviving without meat, and there's nothing to be said for dalliance with vegetarianism – and therefore at the very center you find the bleeding heart, the abattoirs." The meat industry was not something to shy away from, but rather be embraced and understood as a part of industrialization. Vladimir Mayakovsky, *My Discovery of America*, trans. Neil Cornwell (London: Modern Voices, 2005), 88.

<sup>110</sup> See Image 22.

dream?” Only to respond that this is absolutely not a dream, but reality. It is the proud accomplishments of a modern, industrialized agricultural base. This is the general line that Stalin envisioned, further reinforced by the title card that proclaims in letters that engulf the screen, a *kolkhoz*. From this *kolkhoz* comes a seed for cultivation at Marfa’s dairy cooperative, the calf Fomka. He will grow into a massive bull and with him the dairy cooperative will grow into a Bovine Cooperative. In the original cut of *The General Line* Fomka came not from a Soviet collective, but rather from trade with the West. The re-edits to the film fundamentally change this relationship by making Fomka a product of Soviet engineering and Stalin’s proclamation of “socialism in one state.” This nationalistic movement hoped to make the Soviet Union not only self sufficient, but also an economic powerhouse.

This economic transformation could only be achieved through the conglomeration of the city and the countryside. This theme is underscored when industrial workers from the so-called temple of industry come to aid the peasants in the construction of new, modern homes and facilities.<sup>111</sup> Like an industrial army, they come marching toward the screen, willing to forgo their vacation time for the betterment of the Soviet Union. A sponsored village is being raised in record time as Marfa, and many others from the newly formed Bovine Cooperative, join the industrial labor force in their construction. This scene is juxtaposed with the earlier tearing down of the village in the first reel. The sawing of the home in the first scene occurred from right to left as the saw moved horizontally, representing stagnant, forced labor. In contrast, the new construction

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<sup>111</sup> See Image 27.

explodes with a sense of euphoria, where the sawing of the wood is up and down as it cuts vertically across the screen, showing the upward push of the village from the grasps of poverty and destitution.<sup>112</sup> From this work, the *kolkhoz* is able to construct a common stable. This motif reinforces the common theme of the film, which is that through the initiative of the individual, fused with the hard work of the collective, the possibilities and future of the Soviet Union is as endless as a circle. What is also noteworthy about this scene is Eisenstein's depiction of the production process. There is nothing obscured about the labor that is going into the production of the homes.

The industrial army that comes to help in the construction of barn also bring with them a grain sorter, which offers the collective the opportunity to radically increase their overall yield. The grain sorter is only shown briefly, but the dominant image of the machine is of the wheel used to rotate the sorter.<sup>113</sup> This is another example of technological advancement being represented by circular imagery. In order to further their productive capacity they need further capital development. For this reason, Marfa and many others at the core of the Bovine Cooperative call for the purchase of a tractor, that very piece of machinery that would allow for a radical increase in productivity and the general wealth of the cooperative. The proposition of a tractor, however, reveals hidden factions present in the community, as the old balk at the idea.

A title card states that the peasants need to learn to work together in order to succeed. Scenes of grain being separated from the seeds are intercut with images of

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<sup>112</sup> See Image 28.

<sup>113</sup> See Image 30.

collective wood gathering and Marfa feeding Fomka. With the proper nutrition and attention, Fomka is beginning to grow along with the collective. This gives way to young women cleaning themselves with soap and preparing for a wedding. Everyone is draped with flowers and traditional peasant clothing that are symbolic of growth, fertility and plenty. As the title cards proclaim the coming of the bride from the barn, out walks a toddler clutching a bouquet in both hands. The peasants are overcome with laughter and the title card once again announces the arrival of the bride. This time out walks a kitten with a flower necklace tied around its neck. These images of youth proceed the real betrothed, a cow who will become the mating partner for Fomka. Gone is the young calf from the modern *kolkhoz* and in his place stands a full-grown bull.<sup>114</sup> Through the use of montage, Eisenstein is able to age Fomka in a matter of seconds from a feeble calf, to a massive bull. The mating scene between the bride and the groom is played for laughs, but its symbolism is something common throughout the entire film. When Fomka finally mounts the cow, Eisenstein intercuts scenes of the Volkhov Hydroelectric Plant and cascading rivers and fountains, the same images montaged in the cream separator scene. The film constantly makes use of fertility symbols, such the pregnant woman at the beginning of the film, the imagery of the seeds spewing out of the grain sorter, and the explicit sexual imagery of the cream separator scene. Eisenstein uses these images to reinforce the idea that collectivization and support of the Soviet State offers bounty and plenty in comparison to the old subsistence life of struggle and hardship.

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<sup>114</sup> See Images 31-32.

From the marriage of Fomka and the cow comes dozens of offspring that literally fill the screen. It is interesting to compare the livestock in these scenes, which are well fed and frolicking in fields full of growth, with the emaciated beasts of burden from the start of the film. There, the animals were skeletal and struggle to walk through fields caked with dirt and dust. Here the animals are alive and vibrant and in evident contrast to the ways of the old. What precedes this scene is the start of the autumn harvest, an episode that feels fully ripped from the pages of Tolstoy's prose. The title cards declare the supremacy of Jarov, the best reaper in the area. His enthusiasm for the harvest can only be compared to Levin's intensity and love of the peasant way in *Anna Karenina*. Jarov, however, faces competition from the young peasant who helped to found the Dairy Cooperative. As the meter between the cuts increases, so too does the intensity of the scene. Will the young peasant overtake the older Jarov? With a flock of peasants cheering on their progress, the young peasant is about to overcome the mighty Jarov.<sup>115</sup> The competition between the two is distinct because it emphasizes individual endeavor and determination in contrast to collective work. This is also contemporaneous with socialist competition movement. This movement saw workers setting "socialist self-obligations" for how much to produce individually. Workers would compete over who could outdo the quotas set by their fellow workers.

This victory, however, is short lived. Progress often comes in waves of improvements, and, here, the tooth pattern on the hind legs of a grasshopper announces

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<sup>115</sup> See Image 34.

the arrival of the newest innovation, an industrial reaper.<sup>116</sup> Like a locust swallowing a field whole, the reaper performs the labor of dozens of Jarovs in an effortless movement.<sup>117</sup> As the title card boldly proclaims, the machine is the path toward the future. It can cut the hay, turn it over and collect it on a truly massive scale.

With the arrival of autumn, another form of cycles comes the start of the harvest. Marfa is shown walking through fields of wheat as tall as her. The general party bureaucracy answers Marfa's desire for a tractor to aid in the harvest. Eisenstein depicts the offices of the bureaucratic institution as the staple of mechanization of the time. Typewriters and pencil sharpeners overtake the screen,<sup>118</sup> filling the takes with the platen of the typewriter lunging toward the audience and the cutting wheels of the sharpener spinning with ever increasing intensity. The images of the machines are distinct from earlier scenes, where the workers are shown to be in equal standing with the people who operate them. In contrast, the tools of bureaucracy have overtaken the bureaucrats. One example shows an office worker standing behind a desk with a massive book in the foreground. The man is shown to be tiny and insignificant in comparison to the scale of the institution. The typewriter and the woman taking dictation reveal the significance of

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<sup>116</sup> See Images 35-36.

<sup>117</sup> In the "Filmic Fourth Dimension," Eisenstein defines the arrival of the grasshopper and the mowing-machine in terms of overtone montage. Eisenstein comments that "in *Old and New*, 'the climax of the religious procession (to pray for relief from the drought), and the sequence of the grasshopper and the mowing-machine, are edited visually according to sound associations, with an express development which exists already in their spatial 'similarity'." The sound a grasshopper makes while rubbing its legs together is linked through editing to the industrial noise of the mowing-machine. Overtone montage is effective in placing two distinct objects without a clear common physical trait together. Eisenstein, "Filmic Fourth Dimension," 68.

<sup>118</sup> See Image 37.

the scene. The bureaucrats are refusing the cooperative a loan until after the harvest, asking them to address complaints with the proper authorities on the matter. With the pressing stamp of the chief bureaucrat, the fate of the harvest is thrown into question. This then cuts to a scene of woman struggling to collect the wheat against the forceful winds of the steppe.<sup>119</sup> The forces of wind and rain blow the harvest all over the place, destroying the work that previously had been accomplished.

The chief bureaucrat is again shown signing the decree and wiping the fountain pen on a small bust of Lenin, which states, “less political chatter.” The office is filled with everything necessary for them to work effectively, but ultimately it fails to fix the immediate needs of peasants. For this reason, Marfa and another peasant embark as delegates to the city in hopes of swaying the opinions of the bureaucrats. The wheels of the cart they use to travel the great distance to the city are intercut with the spinning wheels of a train.<sup>120</sup> Marfa is traveling at top speed to the city in order to have a chance to save the harvest. The images of the industrial center show the enormity of the industrial growth for the Soviet Union. Trains and large factories dominate the screen, leaving no question about the industrial development and might of the Soviet Union.

As Marfa and the older peasant work to procure a tractor for the cooperative, the peasants are shown to be feeding Fomka, who in turn feeds them. Fomka has become an emblem of the peasants’ success and, for this reason, has attracted the sinister gazes of the *kulaks*, who are willing to harm Fomka in order to strike a blow against the peasants.

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<sup>119</sup> See Images 39-40.

<sup>120</sup> See Images 41-42.

Agents of the *kulaks* are dispatched to the cooperative, where they feed poison to Fomka.<sup>121</sup>

At the Service of Agricultural Restocking, Loan and Machines (SARLM), Marfa and the other peasant are depicted as being significantly out of place. Their peasant dress and general mannerisms are distinct from the urban appearances of the bureaucrats, all of whom are shown coolly relaxed with a cigarette in their hands. The delegates are strained to grab the attention of the bureaucrats, who are operating more with a sense of leisure than purpose. Though the offices are filled with busts and images of Lenin, the SARLM has all but lost its sense of revolutionary drive. They are surrounded by images of revolutionary fervor, but the revolution has failed to reach them.<sup>122</sup> When they finally reach the office of the Chief Administrator, they find him leisurely reading *Pravda*. He is all but oblivious to the world around him. What shocks the office into action is the male peasants loud declaration of “Apply the General Line.” With this call for action, the attention of all of the office workers is captured. This is juxtaposed against images of bright flames shooting across the field, which set an incendiary blaze across the land. Laid over the image of Lenin’s bust is the title card of the “The General Line of the RKI.”<sup>123</sup> With this the Chief Administrator quickly signs the loan forms and a tractor is

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<sup>121</sup> See Image 45.

<sup>122</sup> See Images 47-48.

<sup>123</sup> The Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspector, RKI or Rabkrin (Рабоче-крестьянская инспекция, РКИ, Рабкрин) was a governmental office that was responsible for inspecting and scrutinizing the state, local, and enterprise administrations from 1920 to 1934. Its central focus was to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental agencies. In 1934 following the success of the Five-Year Plans, and the overall health of the economy, RKI was dissolved and its powers were shifted to the People’s Control Commission. This department would continue to exist until the break up of the Soviet Union. Leon Boim,



magically constructed in a matter of seconds through the use of montage. The tempo of the office dramatically increases as the bureaucrats work in double time to keep pace with the general line. The order is delivered and Marfa and her compatriot joyously depart from the office having secured the future of their *kolkhoz*. A translucent driverless Fordson tractor rolls across the screen into the Cooperative of Machines. It appears as if a spirit of the tractor order is being delivered to the small plant.<sup>124</sup>

The progress and development achieved at the offices of the bureaucrats is contrasted with the mysticism and regression found amongst the peasants as they work to save the life of the poisoned Fomka. The lives of the peasants are shown in blatant contrast to the modernity of the city office. Here, the traditional wooden light source is used as opposed to electric lighting in the city. Peasants use the skulls of deceased bulls to ward off the specter of death that threatens to take Fomka and their livelihood. Some of the oldest women in the village compact to use witchcraft to cure the dying Fomka. They concoct potions and rub frogs all over Fomka, but in the end, the old ways fail to save Fomka from his fate. It appears as if the *kulaks* have stuck a devastating blow to the cooperative.

Marfa returns to the village brimming with joy over the purchase of the tractor. She even arrives with two balloons in hand, which are symbolic not only of the celebration for the cooperatives' successful purchase of the tractor but also are circular markers of the new and the progressive. There is also the connection that the Russian

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Glenn G. Morgan, and Aleksander W. Rudzinski, *Legal Controls in the Soviet Union*, ed. Z. Szirmai (Netherlands: A. W. Sijthoff, 1966), 55

<sup>124</sup> See Image 49.

word for balloon “*shariki*” and the word for globe: “*zemnoy shar.*” The balloons could easily represent the promise of greater global connections economically that the tractor will provide. Upon hearing of the death of Fomka, Marfa is overcome with grief. All that she had worked for had been tragically sabotaged by the *kulaks*. As she collapses to the ground and releases the balloons, it appears as if she has lost all hope. The release of the balloons signifies the destruction of this world Marfa envisioned, one of greater development for the village and greater global connections. However, as the balloons ascend into the air Marfa raises her head to see that not all hope is lost. Fomka’s son is still alive and so too is the Bovine Cooperative.<sup>125</sup> The young again become the beacon of growth and progress for the peasant community.

All of the peasants gather to eagerly await the arrival of the tractor. A sign proudly proclaims, “Let us tighten up the links with the country,” which appears as if it has been taken directly from Stalin’s speech on “The General Line.” The development of the Soviet Union as a whole necessitates the strengthening of the link between the countryside and the urban centers. Without this bond the Soviet Union will not be able to stand on sound footing. As the sponsor delivers a speech and a band begins to play, the “hero of the day” mounts the tractor and the spectacle begins. As the hero fires up the engines, the horses are startled by the loud noise and begin to buck in their harnesses. The tractor has drastically changed the order of things in the village. Draft animals, who need food and are prone to sickness, are now no longer required to plow the land. Mechanization has overtaken the cooperative.

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<sup>125</sup> See Image 50.

The events of the day, however, do not go as planned. As the hero tries to drive the tractor through the loose soil of the steppe, his wheels get caught and he accidentally burns out the engine.<sup>126</sup> As the tractor operator cranks the engine, the pistons start and then stop. He is abandoned by all except our lone heroine, who comes to the aid of the hero. As he reaches for the flag attached to the top of the radiator on the Fordson tractor, Marfa stops him and offers up fabric from her dress as a fix to the machine. This is a strong statement toward self-sacrifice in the name of the communist future. Marfa would not allow a red flag to be tarnished in the name of progress, so she is willing to give up the clothes off her back to aid in the needs of the cooperative. Strip by strip and tear by tear, the hero and Marfa are able to fix the tractor.<sup>127</sup> Not only is this a scene of sacrifice, it also offers a romantic connection between the hero and Marfa. As the tractor operator removes the fabric from her clothes to fix the machine, he is literally undressing her. Here again, romance and (re)productivity go hand in hand.

The repairs are done in the most basic of fashions, but they work. Marfa and the hero begin to drive the tractor down the hill toward the teahouse where many of the village residents have gathered. They decided to show the villagers the power of the tractor and enlist the help of the young blond-haired peasant who had defeated Jarov to show them the machines' capabilities. The young communist binds together the wagons of the local villagers and leash them to the moving tractor. The tractor is able to pull dozens of wagons, showing how much more powerful the tractor is in comparison to a

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<sup>126</sup> See Image 51.

<sup>127</sup> See Image 52.

horse drawn carriage.<sup>128</sup> When the peasants realize what has happened they jump onto their horse and race after the caravan of wagons. The peasants arrive in time to see the tractor surmount the hill and smash through the wooden fences that enclose the land.<sup>129</sup> Private property has been overcome by technological advancement, and the peasants cheer for the success of the cooperative. Agriculture and industry are shown to be able to overcome the perils of the old world. Teams of tractors are shown plowing the land in outward moving circles, a final symbolic reference to the circular motif dominant throughout the film which has always been present when growth and innovation are depicted transforming the landscape.<sup>130</sup> The tractor tills and cultivates the land with ease. The old struggles of the past give way to the bounty and opportunities of the future. In a matter of seconds Eisenstein shows the land being transformed from barren landscapes to fields of plenty. Massive silos are filled with grain and bags of surplus are prepared for export.

The film concludes with the tractor operator relaxing in a wagon full of hay with a young peasant girl. He has given up his modern clothes for the traditional peasant *kosovorotka*. As his horse drawn wagon moves away from the screen, barreling forward comes a tractor, operated by a figure in the most modern of outfits. As the two parties pass one another, both stop and begin to greet and approach one another.<sup>131</sup> The operator

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<sup>128</sup> See Image 53.

<sup>129</sup> See Image 54.

<sup>130</sup> See Image 55.

<sup>131</sup> See Image 56.

of the tractor is revealed to be none other than Marfa. Eisenstein proceeds to flashback through all of the struggles and triumphs of Marfa and the cooperative as a whole, beginning with the plowing of the fields, the calls for a cooperative, the condensing of the milk, the saving of profits for the collective, and the arrival of the tractor. As Marfa and the tractor operator embrace the final title card states, “That is the way in which boundaries vanish between the city and the country.” Marfa and the tractor operator have traded their class identities with Marfa donning the black leather uniform of the tractor operator and the tractor operator now pleasantly relaxed in Tolstovka tunic.<sup>132</sup> Marfa has now become the physical representation of the dramatic transformation of the countryside under collectivization and the Five-Year Plan. When the two embrace at the film’s conclusion, Eisenstein offers a union of sorts between the old and the new.

The ending is a culmination of the dialectical development of the film. In other words, it is not focused on the new supplanting the old but rather the collision of the thesis of the new with the antithesis of the old to create a synthesis that is higher, more nuanced, and sublime than the aggregate parts. The combination of Marx’s dialectical method (which Eisenstein encountered during his work on *Capital*), Freud’s sublimation (which is most prominent during Marfa’s ecstasy at the success of the cream separator), and Eisenstein’s newly expanded theories of montage come together to produce something much grander than the individual components. The embrace between the two heroes is in many ways the symbolic embracing of the disparate components of the film, which together produce the lofty whole – *The Old and the New*. Though the ending of the

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<sup>132</sup> See Image 57.

film is symbolic on many levels, the path toward its completion was fraught with conflict and controversy.

The original ending of the film, however, drew upon the duality that is present throughout the film and proved to be a major point of contention between Sovkino, Eisenstein, and Stalin: “The script concludes on a cheerful note with a shot of Mikhail Kalinin, ceremonial President of the Soviet Union, smiling and saying, ‘Eat your fill!’ From the opening images of tension and violence, the scenario has progressed to a conclusion of prosperity and goodwill.”<sup>133</sup> This ending, though, would not be the one to be shown when the film premiered in three theatres in Moscow and 52 other theatres across the Soviet Union.

#### **viii. The Debut of *The Old and the New***

Before the premiere, Eisenstein would receive an invitation to meet with Stalin about the film: “Stalin complained that the conclusion of the film was inappropriate. He told him, ‘Life must prompt you to find the correct end for the film. Before going to America, you should travel through the Soviet Union, observe everything, comprehend it, and draw your own conclusions about everything you see.’”<sup>134</sup> The new ending would instead offer Stalin something more appropriate to the current political tastes. The embrace of Marfa and the tractor operator at the end offered a safer ending to the film by avoiding the politically dangerous territory of showing a politician who may not be around by the time the film would premiere. In fact, there are hardly any references to

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<sup>133</sup> Kepley, 44.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 40.

Soviet politicians in the film. Lenin is the only political figure featured predominantly in the film. There is an inkwell in the likeness of the founder of the Soviet Union when Marfa visits the bureaucrats, as well as massive busts and portraits. The other representation of Lenin comes when Eisenstein shows a banner featuring a depiction of first Soviet leader, when the tractor first arrives at the village. Even though *The Old and the New* is political in nature, the film itself shies away from directly referencing contemporary public figures. This could possibly be related to the reshoots and edits that Eisenstein was forced to make in *October* in order to remove Trotsky from the finished film.

The premiere of the film on November 7<sup>135</sup> was a very symbolic date, coinciding with the Twelfth Anniversary of the October Revolution and the massive push toward greater collectivization.<sup>136</sup> It also marked the publication of Stalin's article "The Year of the Great Turn." This speech called for the complete abandonment of any residual New Economic Policies and the acceleration of collectivization and industrialization. What better film to coincide with such a speech and events than Eisenstein's ode to collectivization.

The film would open to generally favorable reviews from the critics. Many would remark on the unique style and the cream separator scene became the most widely discussed section of the film. The last great irony of *The Old and the New* is that Eisenstein would not be present at the debut of his film. He would leave Moscow directly

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<sup>135</sup> Scholars disagree over when *The Old and the New* premiered. Most sources place the date of the premiere on November 7, 1929, the twelfth anniversary of the October Revolution. Kepley places the opening of the film on October 7, 1929. Kepley, 40.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

following his work on the film to begin his travels abroad that would find him in Hollywood and Mexico. Eisenstein left Moscow hoping to learn about sound technology in the West and even planned to add sound to *The Old and the New* at a later date. This dream would never be realized. Eisenstein would spend a little over four years travelling in the West and planning a number of different projects in Hollywood. The closest Eisenstein would get to completing a work would come with his joint venture in Mexico with novelist, and outspoken socialist Upton Sinclair. His work with Sinclair on *Que Viva Mexico* would be cut short before completion when Stalin recalled him to the Soviet Union under the fear that Eisenstein was defecting. Eisenstein would never see a fully edited version of the film premiere. *The Old and the New* became the last feature length film he would complete for a decade. One of the great ironies of *The Old and the New* is the film he spent the most time developing and that would mark the end of the first act of his career, is in many ways the most forgotten of his works.



## Chapter V:

### Eisenstein as an Economist: A Conclusion

“You have to firmly keep in mind that of all the arts, the most important for us is cinema.”<sup>137</sup>

- V. I. Lenin

As early as 1922, Lenin saw the vital role that cinema would play in the USSR and viewed film as the medium best suited to the Party’s desire to build a socialist state and enlighten the minds of the people with the doctrines of Marxism-Leninism. First of all, film was well-suited to reach massive segments of the Soviet Union because the nation remained mainly illiterate. Cinema told stories accessible to the widest of possible audiences and, in this way, was a crucial tool in the development of Soviet culture. Additionally, among the other artistic media of the time, it was the most social, which imbued it with the idea that it was the art form of the people. Movies during this time were watched in large, newly constructed cinemas or makeshift outdoor theatres. It was designed to be viewed in a group and to elicit a collective response.

Lenin’s remarks on cinema coincided with the start of NEP, a period of economic development and rebuilding following the nearly decade long war period that had engulfed Russia. The Soviet Union would strive to define itself culturally and economically under the mixed-market system of NEP. The fusing of capitalism with

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<sup>137</sup> “Вы должны твёрдо помнить, что из всех искусств для нас важнейшим является кино.” V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii V. I. Lenina*, 5-e izdanie, t. 44 (M.: Izdatel’stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1970), 579.

State controlled development would not only have implications in the economic sphere. NEP would have broad implications in the evolution of different art forms, especially for the “most important of all the arts.”

A year following Lenin’s comments on cinema, Eisenstein would make a similar claim. In his “Montage of Attractions,” he would state, “the basic materials of the theatre arise from the spectator himself – and from our guiding of the spectator into a desired direction (or a desired mood), which is the main task of every functional theatre.”<sup>138</sup> It is the role of cinema to shape the views of the audience toward a specific directive. For this reason the director would play the role of engineer constructing the consciousness of communism in the viewer. Russian cinema at the time was still far removed from the highly developed industry that Lenin envisioned. It would be another three years before Eisenstein would first appear on the scene with his first feature length work, *Strike*.

If Marfa experienced her moment of ecstasy kneeling before the explosive potential of the cream separator, then Sergei Eisenstein encountered his own flash of ecstasy at the juncture of economic evolution and his own engagement with Marx’s *Capital*. What began as a kind of agrarian response to the style and themes of *Battleship Potemkin* was transformed over the four-year production into a new film defined by economic thought and policy. *The Old and the New* would be the cinematic peak for Eisenstein the economist. Never again would he attempt a project that would require such a strong grasp of Marxian theory and the changing policies of agricultural development. In this way, *The Old and the New* is one of the most important of his works precisely

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<sup>138</sup> Eisenstein, 230.

because it deals with the present, not history or myth. The reality of *The Old and the New* was not conceived in a single stroke of brilliance but rather was transformed and developed along with the changing face of the Soviet economy. There is no part of the development of *The Old and the New* or the film itself that is not touched by macro and microeconomic theory and practice. For this reason, Eisenstein needed to construct a cinematic language that spoke the language of economics. This is present in the distinct theories of montage and cinematic style he employs throughout the film.

What Eisenstein achieves in *The Old and the New* is the ability to bring the great macroeconomic forces transforming the Soviet Union down to the micro level. In presenting the tale of Marfa as “one of many,” he argues that it is the conglomeration of the “Marfas” across the Soviet Union that will lead to the fulfillment of the “General Line.” Eisenstein envisioned thousands of other highly motivated citizens across the Soviet Union willing to answer the call of the cooperative and collectivization. What was first necessary for this to occur was a national awakening, a global moment of ecstasy that will inspire peasants and workers to unite around the common goals of the advancement of the working class and the creation of communism. Eisenstein saw aesthetic value as not merely relegated to the arts. *The Old and the New* shows the peasants as producers of aesthetic value as well. Here, their masterpiece was not produced on celluloid but rather on the earth of the Soviet Union.

In *The Old and the New*, Eisenstein was responding not only to the changing economic landscape of the nation but also to his evolving understanding of Marx’s theories and the rising power and influence of Stalin. Eisenstein aspired to create a film

that would clearly and accessibly bring Marx's method and theory to the masses; at the same time, he was forced to balance his own idiosyncratic reading of Marx with the implementation of Stalin's agricultural and economic development plans. It would need to be concrete in its message and focused on reaching the widest audience. If the film itself did not already adhere to the party line, the personal suggestions and edits required by Stalin would ensure the fealty of the film to the party. The key aspects of the film that influenced the final production are also closely in tune with the three guiding principles of Socialist Realism: partiness, concreteness, and being of the people.<sup>139</sup> *The Old and the New* was completed five years before the declaration of Socialist Realism as the official style of Soviet culture, but much of what came to define the genre was already present in the film.

As much as *The Old and the New* embraces what came to dominate the artistic landscape of the Soviet Union, there is still a sense that *The Old and the New* exists beyond the simple categorization of Socialist Realism. The censorship and increased difficulties that the film faced towards the end of production only increased as the Soviet Union continued to embark upon subsequent Five-Year Plans over the course of the 1930s. Eisenstein would not be able to complete a feature length film for nearly a decade. The only film Eisenstein would complete during the period was a twenty minute short he

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<sup>139</sup> These three terms (партийность, конкретность и народность) in many ways are hard to define neatly in English. Партийность is best expressed as being of the party or expressing a clear partisanship. In the Soviet context, it means how something relates to the doctrine of the Bolsheviks. For конкретность, the most concise definition is "specificity," "clarity," or "concreteness." In regards to Socialist Realism, it relates to how clearly the message is put forth and whether a wide audience easily understands it. Finally for народность, the term means both "of the people" as well as "national." Socialist Realism as a genre comes from the desire to advance the goals of Marxism-Leninism so the artwork most reflects the goals and ideology of "the people." Clark, 27-28.

produced in France during the summer of 1930 called *Romance Sentimentale*. During his time in the Americas he would propose at least two different films with the intent of making them in Hollywood, *Shutter's Gold*, a tale of the California Gold Rush based on a work by Jack London, as well as an adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*. Neither of these films, which share many thematic similarities to *The Old and the New*, would come to fruition because of anti-communist sentiment in Hollywood. His work with socialist author Upton Sinclair on an episodic tale of Mexican history and culture would also face challenges. Eisenstein would never fully edit *Que Viva Mexico*. He would be recalled to the Soviet Union by Stalin himself, who feared the famed director might have defected to the West. In addition to the incomplete *Que Viva Mexico*, his 1935 film *Bezhin Meadows* would be censored and destroyed before release. It would be nearly a decade from the premiere of *The Old and the New* before Eisenstein would be able to see a successfully completed work debut in the Soviet Union with *Alexander Nevsky* in 1938.

Though Eisenstein would seriously struggle with the censors as early as *October* it was *The Old and the New* that marked the artistic tipping point between creative liberty and state imposed doctrine upon his work. These issues of censorship on the part of the Soviet elites combined with the emergence of Socialist Realism spelled the end of Eisenstein the economist. Many of the aspects of the film that make it distinctive, such as the sensual montage and use of non-diegetic images in the cream separator scene, could easily have faced greater censorship under the increasingly orthodox state apparatus. For

as much as *The Old and the New* anticipates the rise of Socialist Realism, it could never fully lose its avant-garde qualities or the influence of Marx's *Capital*.

Economics proved central to the development of *The Old and the New* and is reflected in the artistic styles that strove to depict them. Macroeconomic policy and trends are often beyond the imagination of the average worker. It is comprised of infinite interactions and agreements, products that are sold and resold, workers who sell their labor power, and capitalists who exploit their control over the means of production. The immensity of the subject matter is what makes the achievements of Eisenstein so profound. *The Old and the New* allowed Eisenstein for the briefest of moments to influence how people perceived economics. Ultimately, what makes *The Old and the New* relevant is that Eisenstein was able to visualize the invisible processes of economics, fuse periphery and center, harmonize macro and microeconomic principles, and elicit a clear response from the audience. In doing so, Eisenstein created a work of art that is both utterly of its time, while still expressing a timeless sentiment.

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**Appendix I:**  
**Timeline of the Development of *The Old and the New***

**May 1926:** Eisenstein and Alexandrov began work on their unnamed agricultural film (*The General Line*).

**May 23, 1926:** Eisenstein and Alexandrov finish first screenplay

**June 22-30, 1926:** Complete shooting script

**June 30, 1926:** Draft of screenplay is submitted and approved by Sovkino. Studio agrees to four month shooting schedule from October 1, 1926 to February 1, 1927

**July 7, 1926:** Film discussed and approved by the bureau of censors at the Artistic Council

**August - September 1926:** Eisenstein and film crew travel to Ryazan district where they do preliminary location scouting and casting.

**October 1, 1926:** Filming begins on *The General Line* on schedule. Shooting progresses through the winter of 1926 in Rostov-on-Don, Baku, and the northern Caucasus.

**December 1926:** Marfa's dream of the horde of cows and the massive bull rising up from the ground is filmed on the Mugan Steppe.

**January 1927:** Sovkino instructs Eisenstein to stop shooting *The General Line* in order to begin work on *October* for the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution.

**February 1927:** Eisenstein premieres segments of *The General Line* to writers and critics in Moscow.

**October 12, 1927:** First reference to a film version of Marx's *Capital* in his notes. His writings and notes on *Capital* periodically continue until April 22, 1928.

**January 20, 1928:** *October* premieres in the Soviet Union three months later than the originally planned release date of November 7, 1927.

**March 1928:** Eisenstein visits fellow artists Vladimir Mayakovsky and Sergei Tretyakov at Tretyakov's home in Moscow where they debate the intellectual montage scene in *October* and Eisenstein breaks with Novy Lef against Mayakovsky's objections.

**April 1928:** Eisenstein and Alexandrov return to their work on *The General Line* with a second filming schedule. They return to Rostov-on-Don where they will do location shooting at the collective "Giant." It was during this time that they find Marfa Lapkina, who will play the self-titled character in the new draft of the film.

**April 13, 1928:** Eisenstein takes short break from shooting to travel to Kiev for premiere of Alexander Dovzhenko's agricultural film *Zvenigora*.

**August 1928:** During this time location shooting of the film is completed.

**September 1928:** Following the completion of shooting Eisenstein begins to edit and montage the film.

**December 16, 1928:** Eisenstein publicly announces his plans for a film version of Marx's *Capital* in Pravda.

**February 1929:** A first cut of *The General Line* is approved by Sovkino. However following a screening for Stalin where he requests a new ending and additional scenes Eisenstein is forced to return to Rostov-on-Don for material to draft new ending.

**November 7, 1929:** The newly renamed *The Old and the New* premieres in 3 theatres in Moscow and 52 other theatres throughout the Soviet Union.

**Appendix II:**  
**Stills from *The Old and the New***

Image 1: The General Line title card

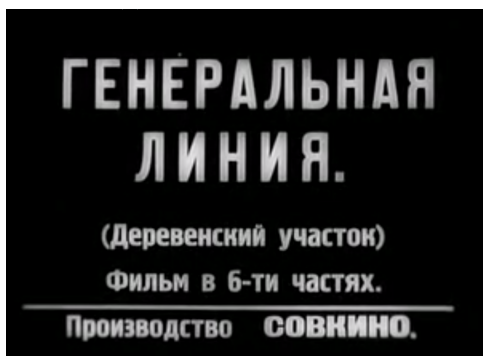


Image 2: If brother leaves brother



Image 3: Division of the home



Image 4: The Sawing of the home



Image 5: Common Lands



Image 6: Enclosure of the land



Image 7: Marfa's Introduction



Image 8: Image of fertility



Image 9: Home of the Kulaks



Image 10: Saw-toothed wood carvings

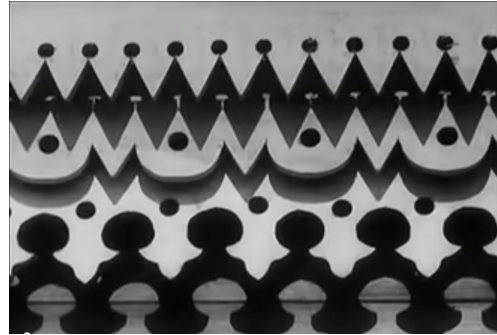


Image 11: Kulak husband



Image 12: Kulak wife with comb



Image 13: Plowing the Land



Image 14: The struggle of the drought



Image 15: Crippled Parishioner



Image 16: Priest's prayers for rain



Image 17: The Introduction of the Separator



Image 18: Roulette Image



Image 19: Volkhov Hydroelectric Dam



Image 20: Marfa's Ecstasy



Image 21: Bull Dream Sequence



Image 22: Futuristic Kolkhoz



Image 23: From Birth



Image 24: To Butchering

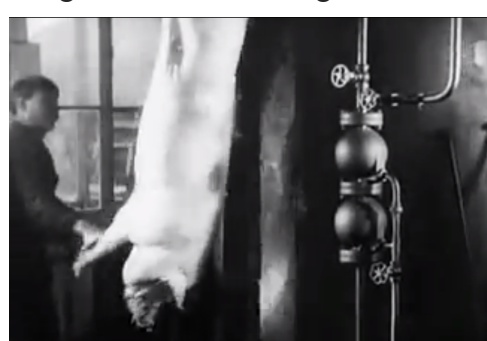


Image 25: Circular Stripping of Pig



Image 26: Porcelain Pig



Image 27: Shock Troops Call to Action



Image 28: Vertical Sawing



Image 29: Grain Sorter



Image 30: Wheel of Grain Sorter

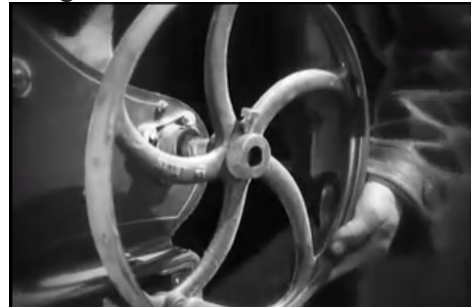


Image 31: The Bride



Image 32: The Groom





Image 33: Tolstoyan Plow Scene



Image 34: Socialist Competition



Image 35: Locust



Image 36: Harvester



Image 37: Pencil Sharpener



Image 38: Officially Stamp Document



Image 39: Struggling Against the Elements



Image 40: Women Harvesting the Field



Image 41: Wagon to the City



Image 42: Train to the City

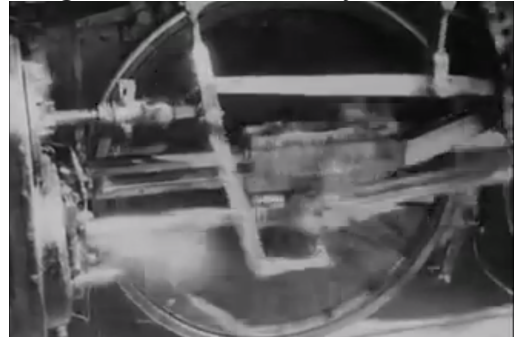


Image 43: Urban Factory



Image 44: Marfa in the City



Image 45: The Poisoning of Fomka



Image 46: Witchcraft and the "Old Way"



Image 47: Marfa at the Bureaucrats



Image 48: "Applying the General Line"



Image 49: Birth of the Tractor



Image 51: The Arrival of the Tractor



Image 53: The Potential of the Tractor



Image 55: Circular Plowing of the Fields



Image 57: The Reviling of Marfa



Image 50: Marfa find's Fomka's Son



Image 52: Marfa's Sacrifice



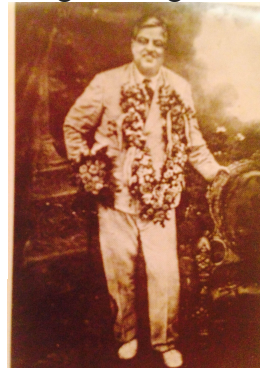
Image 54: Smashing through Enclosure



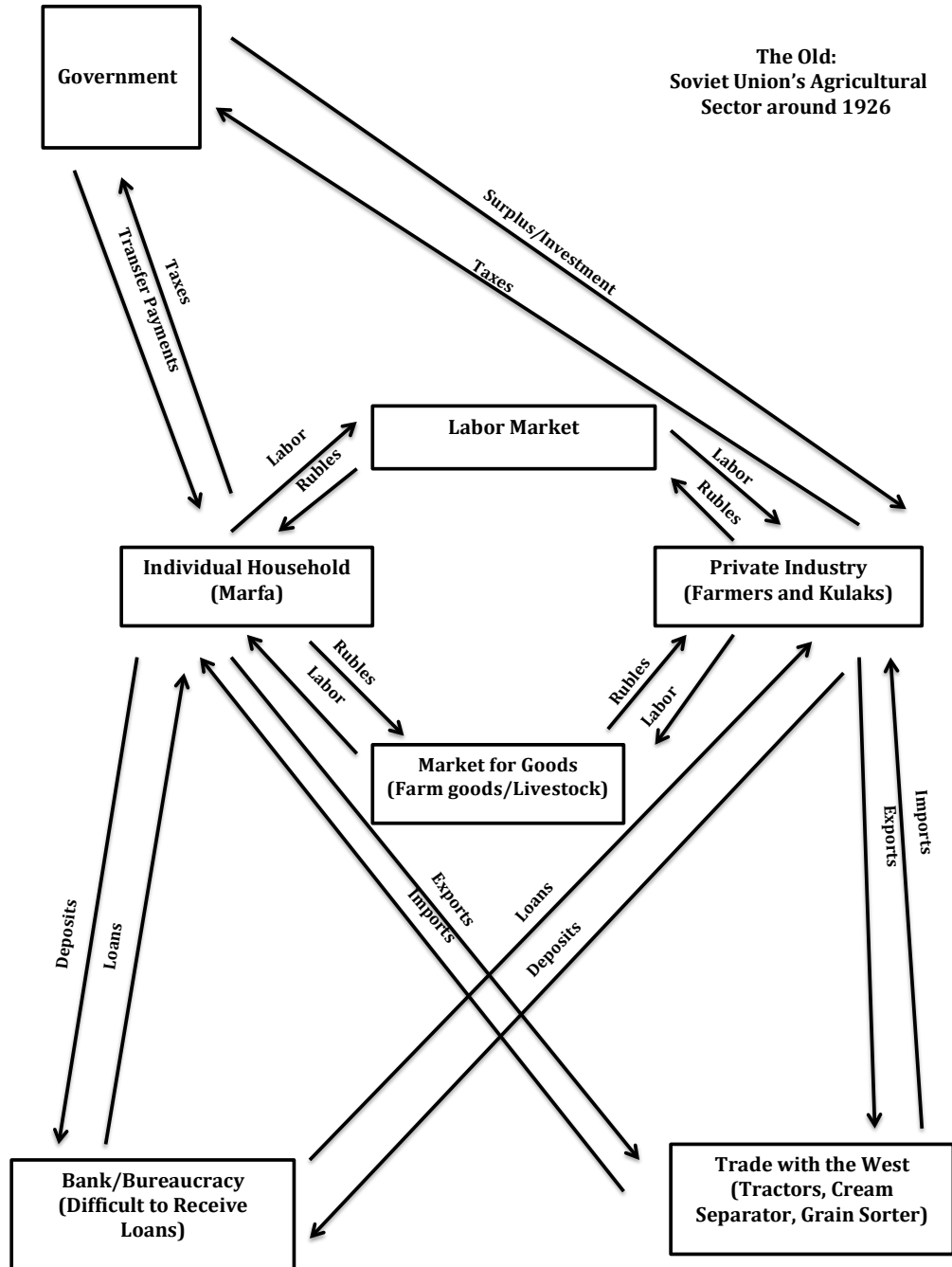
Image 56: The Marriage of the Old and New



Image 58: Agha Kahn from *Capital*



Appendix III: Circular Flow Diagrams



**The New:  
Soviet Union's Agricultural  
Sector around 1929**

