

## **Reflection of Political and Social Developments in Soviet and Russian Cinema**

**Zahra Mohammadi\***

Assistant Professor of Russian Language and Literature, University of Tehran

**Tahereh Solgi**

M.A. in Russian Studies, University of Tehran

(Date received: Jun. 10. 2018 - Date approved: Oct.18.2018)

### **Abstract**

Andreas Bazin says: “Cinema is timid because its main element is life itself”. This article reviews and analyzes the features of Russian films from 1970 to 2010. In this paper, we try to answer this question whether the political transformations and leadership of the government have always influenced both Soviet and Russian cinema. How the political and social transformations in every decade have affected culture, art, including the cinema? The hypothesis of the research is that Soviet and Russia’s cinema have presented their cinematic arts and culture with respect to the ruling politics. For a better understanding of the cinema during 1970s to 2010, featuring the films of this era which has helped the research has been analyzed. Contents and semantic analysis of films during the given period have been examined in order to obtain a better understanding and measurable results. The theoretical framework of the research is based on the theory of “Pierre Sorlin” that the cinema is the essence of a society. With the study of analysis made by comparing the cinematic films of the 1970s, it seems that the main contents of most films in these periods have undergone political and social changes.

Russia’s cinema has never become a global one despite its numerous potentials. In the most active decades of Russian cinema life, the domination of the Soviet government expected cinema to be an honest representation of the Soviet man. The state-building of art, which began in Stalin tenure, had a major impact on cinema as one of the most influential artworks. The government defined a series of expectations for artists in which art was needed to create the ideal face of an ideal Soviet man. For this reason, the films of the 1950s and 60s, under the influence of Stalinist policies, followed

---

\* E-mail: zahra\_mohammadi@ut.ac.ir (Corresponding author)

the idealism and idealization of the Soviet people who lived in communist Soviet Union and served only the community. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Soviet political system was changed.

Previously the government policies were reflected in the Russian cinema and merged with art, especially cinema and literature. For example, you can refer to the directive of the Soviet government in 1920. According to the decree, the basic criterion for assessing the artistic quality of the films was to be presented in a way that can be understood by millions of people. Lenin and Stalin were well aware of the value of educational propaganda and cinema. During the Soviet time, films screening were held. The purpose of the screening was to consolidate the power of communists in the Soviet republics through description of heroic proletarian struggle, which made the difficulties sweet and convinced the victory in the civil war for the revolutionary cause.

A few years later in 1928, the Communist Party Congress issued a decree on subjects regarding the cinema and its products, according to which films should avoid formalism. The wave of empiricism that the Soviet cinema gave way to socialist realism by overthrowing the aesthetics of the world of cinema: that is, to represent life as it would be. Art grew dramatically during this period. Soviet cinema also gained great achievements. The technological equipment of cinema and the style of filmmaking and innovations of the great Soviet filmmakers were remarkable. The issue of national identity is one of the issues that has always been important to Russia and has not lost its importance so far. That's why we paid attention to the issue of identity in Russian cinema and it was examined during the soviet rule.

In 1960s, Russian cinema was introduced to the world and it was already on the path of progress. Khrushchev's cultural policies turned the films of the 1970s and 80s into a special phenomenon that clearly reflected the social relations of that era. The heroes of the films of the 1970s and 80s find the inner world, while the audiences in the 1950s and 60s witnessed the heroes of machines serving the progress of society. The bitter and naked cinema of the Perestroika era - was criticized for blaming the blackout - recorded films such as: *Brother, Deaf, Snipers, and Robbers* in the history of Russian art, a clear reflection of a society on the verge of collapse. The sudden release of Soviet art which was on the brink of collapse also affected the cinema of the 1990s, and many social uncertainties were displayed more obscure than ever.

In the first decade of the twenty first century, Russian cinema hosted Hollywood movie films and tried to keep this path resolute. By changing the post-Soviet art, the artists approach also changed and cinema started to consider selling films. The Russian version of the American dream is visible

in new Russian films. But the concern of social pathology and the making or returning to Russian identity is still visible in some modern Russian films. The semantic cinema of Russia can confirm this claim. Government support for films adapted from literary works and historical events to production of durable films in this area. Russia's cinema has undergone a transition and it is hoped that there will soon be traces of less non-Russian identity. In recent years, most state-owned investments have been made in film making with historical themes that are aimed at strengthening Russian national identity. Such films have been welcomed among all classes of society.

**Keywords:** Content Analysis, Individual Identity, National Identity, Russian Cinema, Social Collapse.