

DECEMBER 31, 1935

Why I Created "Air-City"

ALEXANDER DOVJENKO

Alexander Dovjenko, together with S. M. Eisenstein and V. I. Pudovkin make up the "big three" in the Soviet cinema. His three films, Arsenal, Soil and Ivan (for which he was awarded the Order of Lenin) have all been seen here. His new film Air-City is soon to be released in this country as Frontier.—THE EDITORS.

MY TRIP to the Far East for the purposes of studying this region, its economics, life, people, nature—with a view to creating a scenario for the film—was probably one of the most outstanding events in my life.

Four whole months I traveled with my group all over the country, using all possible means of conveyance. I traveled by railroad; flew over the great Amur in a hydroplane; beyond Nikolaievsk-on-Amur I rode into the Taiga on horseback; from the mouth of the Amur to Vladivostok I took a boat; I visited Sakhalin, went down into the Suchan coal mines, tramped 400 kilometers through the Taiga following partisan tracks, spent New Year's in Komsomolsk.

And it began to seem to me, that my life was spent wrongly, that I should have come here five years ago and never go back to "Russia," as some of the trappers say. And that I am not a director, but a partisan, a trapper, a member of the Tcheka and I should not be making films, but should be rebuilding the country, discovering its riches and guarding our far-away borders against the enemies of the workers.

I found a place for this feeling: "Fifty years of my life were spent in the Taiga—like a day. And every day I look and cannot stop looking, and I ask myself: is there in the world such beauty and such richness? No. There is no such beauty and such richness! And therefore, tell me, young people, who will dare?" (Glushak's speech at the end of the film.)

We met a number of workers of the Far East Commune, beginning with the leaders and ending with inhabitants of the distant settlements—fisheries, forestries, trappers and kolkhozes of the outlying villages. And everywhere I felt one idea—the forceful socialist advance on the natural resources of this young and plentiful region and the assurance of peace on the border.

During the trip it began to be clear to me that here one can make not one film, but a multitude of beautiful films, articles, novels and symphonies. But I had to make one scenario for one film.

So I decided to select from the mass of impressions the most important ones and, having them generalized and united, express them in the form of a work of art.

The scenario of the *Air-City* is the result. The idea of *Air-City* was not born as an artful resignation, not as a withdrawal from the many things seen or from the hardships of subjecting the actuality to the art form.

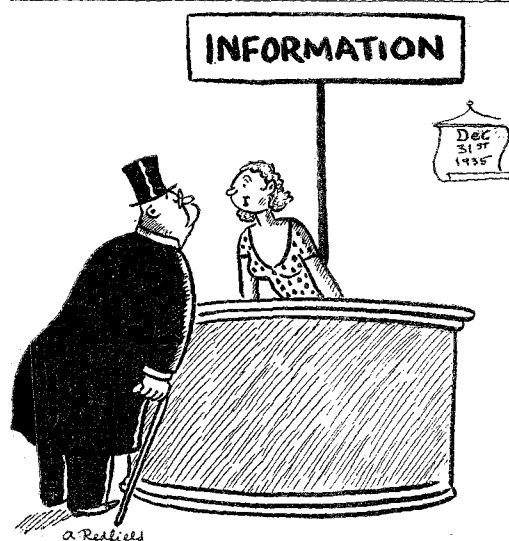
Just the opposite. In my creative and social mind I paid tribute to everything beautiful which I admired in this region of

my great country. But I wanted more than that. Studying the country I came to the conclusion, that our historic future in the Far East Commune must not be dependent upon the existing economic centers. Passing over the Ural and Kuzbas, over the fu Angrastroy and the greatest coal-mining region of Biro-Burey, breaking through the Baikal-Amur Road to a new outlet to the ocean, we must build another great city on the shores of the ocean, a second Vladivostok. I even found a place to build *Air-City* and I decided that this is correct.

And so I think that *Air-City* is not imaginings of an artist, but a reality of days. And if this city does not exist it does not mean a thing. Occasionally I think, what if, while the film was being made, they built a city in the Soviet harbor. In our country everything is possible. I did build Magadan on the Okhotsk shore with miraculous speed and everybody liked it and everybody is happy about it.

In this film I did not want to be an illustrator of things done by the Party, government and the workers, I wanted to be a pioneer of things to be done.

The poetic underline of the film is a result of the fact, that life is beautiful, the region is beautiful and that for flags will never wave in this region.



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Between Ourselves

JOSEPH NORTH has left THE NEW MASSES to become editor of The Sunday Worker, which will begin publication on January 12. Associated with North will be James S. Allen and Edwin Seaver, both of whom have appeared frequently in THE NEW MASSES. The Sunday Worker represents the most ambitious effort in the newspaper field that the revolutionary movement here has thus far made. It will consist of twenty-eight pages, including a news section, rotogravure section and magazine section and will sell for five cents.

In next week's issue Robert Forsythe, who has been accused of having an anti-British phobia, has an article in which he defends his position. "What I want to examine in this article," he writes, "is the peculiar position of Great Britain in the world of culture and politics which makes it so completely an enemy not only of sound liberalism but of freedom and culture in general."

John L. Spivak's article next week examines the similarities between the Nazis' racket and that of Al Capone. Spivak managed to be present at a typical Nazi racketeering scene.

Four poems from THE NEW MASSES

have been selected for inclusion in *The 1935 Anthology of Magazine Verse*, published by the Poetry Digest Association. They are "I, Jim Rogers," by Stanley Burnshaw; "America, 1918," by John Reed; "Bread-winners," by David Greenhood; and "Close Up This House," by Joseph Bridges.

Simone Tery's article "How Barbusse's *Under Fire* Was Published," will appear in International Literature No. 10.

A number of copies of last week's NEW MASSES contained a printer's error in Jean Simon's article "Which Books for Your Children?" In the list on page 25 the caption "For Younger Children" applies only to the final titles, beginning with *Steam Shovel for Me*.

Isidor Schneider will be the speaker at the next meeting of the Friends of THE NEW MASSES. It will be held at Steinway Hall, 113 West 57th Street, on Thursday, January 2, at 8.30 p. m.

Subscribers are urged to notify us promptly of any change of address. Two weeks must be allowed to make such changes effective. Subscribers who fail to receive copies on time are asked to notify our circulation department, giving their correct address.

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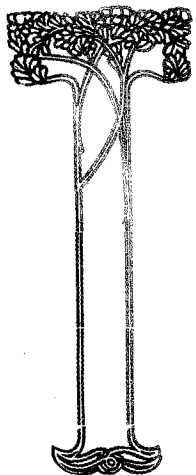
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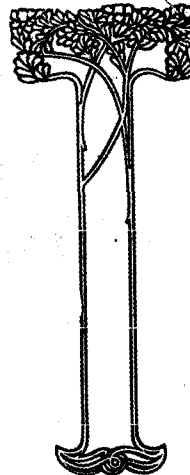


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