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weekly newsreel, and detailed, almost docu-
mentary footage of every event for feature
newsreels to be edited around the major clashes
of the war—the push-back at Moscow, the
siege of Leningrad, the fight at Kharkov, the
tragedy of Sevastopol. Only the first of these,
Moscow Strikes Back, has thus far arrived in
this country. Working on this film the camera-
men Schneiderov and Karmen have told
graphic and exciting accounts of their ex-
periences. This is from Schneiderov's notes:

"It was a dark night when we flew over the
German lines. My photographic supplies were
to take one parachute, myself another. German
searchlights probed the sky around us and
Nazi anti-aircraft sent up a trail of bullets
after us.

"I jumped and as we parachuted to the
ground a group of German night-fighters at-
tacked us. Our planes gave fight and one of
our men was killed. Three of us, myself in-
cluded, were wounded.

"I was worried about my camera and other
equipment and would not leave the spot de-
spite the commander's suggestion. We couldn't
move for the planes were still circling over
us, and I worried all night about my camera.

"Toward morning I saw the red flag mark-
er on our supplies and hurried to claim it. By
some miracle, nothing was damaged."

THE audience was kept supplied with
films. Morale was kept stiff by telling
the truth on the screen. Each spectator was
kept strong by seeing the strength of his coun-
try and his army—whether he was a Moscow
citizen watching the film shows given in the
Moscow subway, or a Sevastopol defender
dodging the Luftwaffe for rest, tea, and a
movie.

The audience was kept aware; instruction
was never relaxed. Actually, instruction came
closer and closer to a life and death matter.
While the first instructional films had titles
such as *How to Fight Incendiary Bombs* and
How to Recognize Enemy Aircraft, those in-
tended for civilians gradually took on titles
such as *Military Surgery* and *How to Operate
the Machine-Gun and Rifle*.

There had always been films about the
Red Army, in the Red Army, and for the
Red Army, but now the Red Army really saw
plenty of films, because films became as essen-
tial to their fighting life as newspapers or
guns. Sixteen millimeter equipment and pro-
jection apparatus have received their first real
Soviet test in trenches and dugouts. All prison-
ers are given regular film-shows, whose pro-
grams are superintended by expert psycholo-
gists. In his report to the Society of Motion
Picture Engineers, Gregori Irsky has told of
special apparatus to bring films to the Red
Army—traveling projection installations and
special equipment for showing pictures in mili-
tary camps during the daytime without the
need for darkened places.

Foreign markets have never been the goal
of Soviet film productions, but never before
have the film theaters of the Soviet Union's
allies cried so loud for Soviet films. These

peoples need them too, for morale and
strength. The demand is so great in England
that every new dramatic film that arrives there
is immediately dubbed in the English language.
America is less interested in dubbed versions
than in re-makes with their own stars and
American voices. Already two have been pur-
chased for this purpose: *Girl from Leningrad*
and *The Thirteen*. Where Soviet films once
dribbled through Latin America, they are now
pouring, with one or two notable exceptions
of fascist-dominated countries. China employs
them as swiftly as she employs Soviet arma-
ments. Soviet films have never been permitted
in India.

And Soviet audiences want to see films of
their allies. Recut English documentaries are
popular and England has herself sent over
fifty short films with Russian commentary.
Nicholas Napoli, of Artkino Pictures, is now
concluding arrangements for the Soviet dis-
tribution of a large number of American films
—the first result of the Conference on the
American and British Cinema, recently held
in Moscow.

THE attitude of Soviet films towards the
war can be summed up in the statement
recently received from the reappeared Dov-
zhenko: "The Soviet camera records the vis-
ual aspect of war completely and unflinchingly
and the record is seen by all."

JAY LEYDA.

From the September "New Movies." Mr.
Leyda edited and translated from the Russian,
Sergei Eisenstein's "The Film Sense," pub-
lished by Harcourt, Brace & Co.

Ten Days

Alvah Bessie revisits this monument of
Soviet film-making.

EISENSTEIN's film masterpiece which he
named for John Reed's great book, *Ten
Days That Shook the World*, has been play-
ing at the Fifty-Fifth Street Playhouse in
New York, and may still be there when you
read these words. Made in the late 1920's
as a silent film *Ten Days* will stand forever
as a monument of Soviet cinema art, whatever
its shortcomings in the light of present film
advances in both the Soviet Union and Amer-
ica. Eisenstein was and is a great director, a
great artist. And the bedrock of the Soviet
cinema's enormous appeal may be found in
Ten Days, just as it is found in *The Girl
from Leningrad*. That bedrock is a special
way of looking at people and the events in
which they participate; or better still, the way
the Soviet cinema artists have of looking at
historical events (or fictional events) through
the medium of the people involved in them.

You will find that the film of *Ten Days* is
somewhat scratched by now; that certain
scenes are not as brilliantly lit as they would
be today; that certain "takes" are too swift
making the eye dance from one face to

another. But you will have to agree that the mastery the great director has shown in so many films was present also in this early one.

The ten days, of course, covered the period from October 15 to October 25, 1917. In that time the world was shaken by events and the potentialities of those events. The central event was the emergence upon the scene of world history of the first socialist state, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics. And what Eisenstein has attempted to compress within the scope of the camera eye are the personalities and forces of that time, the sense of how the October Revolution developed out of the period that preceded it, and came to fruition and success during the *Ten Days*.

It is a cliché to say that the events, as unrolled in this film, look like a newsreel. All Soviet films resemble newsreels, in the sense that their makers know how to achieve the verisimilitude of life-as-it-is-lived every time they assemble a cast of actors before a camera. It is the Soviet way of looking at the world that accounts for this consummate naturalism. And the immediacy this attitude achieves accounts for the profoundly moving qualities of so many of the Soviet Union's films, both major and minor.

In *Ten Days*, Eisenstein has compressed the following facts, and explained them in terms of human character, scene, action, the movement of vast crowds of people, setting, atmosphere. The overthrow of Czar Nicholas II; the arrival of Lenin at the Finland Station; the assumption of power by the provisional government of Kerensky; the rebellion of the Russian Army at the front and the people's demand for Bread, Peace, and Land; the people's discontent with the Provisional Government which was determined to carry on a senseless, brutal, and reactionary war; the careful preparation of the military rebellion, led by the Bolsheviks, and the storming of the Winter Palace, last stronghold of the Kerensky government; the Second Congress of the Soviets, and the arrival upon the podium of Lenin, who began his speech with the immortal words: "Comrades, the workers' and peasants' revolution, about the necessity of which the Bolsheviks have always spoken, has taken place."

All these personalities—Lenin, Kerensky, the Minister of Foreign Affairs—all these tumultuous and apparently chaotic events, are seen through the eyes of the people of Lenin-grad, then Petrograd. The camera moves about the city; from the Winter Palace to the prison where political prisoners are still held; from the Cabinet of Kerensky ministers to the cruiser *Aurora*, waiting in the river with its guns trained on the Winter Palace; from the boudoir of the women's Battalion of Death to Smolny Institute and back to the barricades before the palace; from the face of the vain Kerensky, looking at a statuette of Napoleon, to the face of a member of the Battalion of Death, looking at a reproduction of Rodin's sculpture, *The Kiss*. The film is crammed, in fact, with these significant details—details that illuminate character and



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motivation, as well as reveal the temper and the movements of the time.

Ten Days is impossible, as story, to describe. It is its total impact, compounded of innumerable revealing details, that makes it a masterpiece of art and a lasting document of historical interest. It makes you understand better why the Red Army and the Soviet people are able to accomplish apparently miraculous feats of resistance today.

ALVAH BESSIE.



SOME people never seem to learn. At least, to judge by *Vickie*, which is the work of S. M. Hertzig. Mr. Hertzig has not learned very much. It looks as though what Mr. Hertzig wanted to write was a successful farce comedy that would make a good pot of cash and possibly sell to the movies. But *Vickie* is about as far from a successful farce comedy as he could possibly have written.

The reasons are not hard to find. To simplify them, let us begin with the play's theme and main conflict. The theme is that women in war work (WAAC's, WAVE's, AWVS) are essentially ridiculous. The conflict is between *Vickie*, woman war-worker, and her husband, over her activities as a member of a woman's organization which the playwright did not even have the courage to call the AWVS. But this begging of the question is not important. What is important is that Mr. Hertzig thinks women in uniform are funny; and to carry the idea one step further, he thinks *women* are funny. In fact, he thinks they are ridiculous, helpless, stupid, bird-brained, but definitely to be petted, spoiled, and kept in their place.

Now in order not to be too sober-sided, let us admit that there is material for comedy in *certain* women who, when they put on a uniform, suddenly assume virtues they do not possess in civilian dress. So what? There may be material for comedy in this, but not for an entire play, farce, or otherwise. That was Mr. Hertzig's first mistake. His second was the inability—even granted he *had* the material for comedy (which is a very dubious assumption)—to make it funny on the stage. For all he has done is to bore his audience, annoy it, and wave the moth-eaten banner of male "superiority."

Also, he has poked nonsense at air raid wardens and first-aid classes. Surely it is not necessary at this late date to launch into a defense of women in civilian defense. It is necessary, however, to launch into an *offensive* against people—playwrights or otherwise—who subscribe, even in fun, to the Nazi doctrine of *Kirche, Kueche und Kinder*.

Vickie, by refusing even for an instant to grant the possibility that the women of America are competent to aid in the defense of their country, is a distinct detriment to the war effort. The efforts of Jose Ferrer and Uta Hagen, who are competent performers, and Charles Halton (who is more than competent) fail to lift *Vickie* from what it is—a *danse macabre*—onto the plane of life; however farcical.

A. B.

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Of NEW MASSES, published weekly at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1942.

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Before me, a notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared S. A. Becker, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the business manager of the New Masses and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

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[SEAL.]

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