

V. I. Lenin

Directives on the Film Business

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The People's Commissariat for Education should organise the supervision of all film showings and systematise this business. All films shown in the R.S.F.S.R. should be registered and numbered at the Commissariat for Education. A definite proportion should be fixed for every film-showing programme:

a) entertainment films, specially for advertisement or income (of course, without obscenity and counter-revolution) and

b) under the heading "From the life of peoples of all countries"—pictures with a special propaganda message, such as: Britain's colonial policy in India, the work of the League of Nations, the starving Berliners, etc., etc. Besides films, photographs of propaganda interest should be shown with appropriate subtitles. The privately owned cinemas should be made to yield a sufficient return to the state in the form of rent, the owners to be allowed to increase the number of films and present new ones subject to censor ship by the Commissariat for Education and provided the proper proportion is maintained between entertainment films and propaganda films coming under the heading of films "From the life of peoples of all countries", in order that film-makers should have an incentive for producing new pictures. They should be allowed wide initiative within these limits. Pictures of a propaganda and educative nature should be checked by old Marxists and writers, to avoid a repetition of the many sad instances when propaganda with us defeated its own purpose. Special attention should be given to organising film showings in the villages and in the East, where they are novelties and where our propaganda, therefore, will be all the more

effective.^[1]

Notes

^[1] The Managing Department of the C.P.C. forwarded this document to the Commissariat for Education on January 27, 1922, with the following covering letter: "I am sending you for guidance Vladimir Ilyich's directives on the film business." The Commissariat for Education was instructed: "1) On the basis of these directives to draw up a programme of action and forward it immediately to the Managing Department of the C.P.C. for report to Vladimir Ilyich. 2) To submit to the Managing Department of the C.P.C. within one month a report on what has actually been done in pursuance of these directives and what results have been achieved. 3) To immediately report what functions have been retained by the Commissariat for Education after the promulgation of the last decision of the Council of Labour and Defence on the film business and who is directly in charge of the performance of these functions" (Central Party Archives, Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the C.C. of the C.P.S.U.).

In a conversation, with A. V. Lunacharsky in February 1922 Lenin "once more stressed the necessity of establishing a definite proportion between entertainment films and scientific films". Vladimir Ilyich, Lunacharsky writes in his reminiscences, said that the production of new films imbued with communist ideas and reflecting Soviet realities should be started with newsreel, since, in his opinion, the time had not yet come for the production of such films. "If you have a good newsreel, serious and enlightening pictures, it doesn't really matter if you show some worthless film with them of a more or less usual type to attract the public. A censorship, of course, will be needed. Counter-revolutionary and immoral films should be barred." To this Lenin added: "As you find your feet, what with proper handling of the business, and receive certain loans to carry on, depending on the general improvement in the country's position, you will have to expand production, and particularly make headway with useful films among the masses in the cities, and still more in the countryside.... You must remember always that of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema" (*Sovietskoye Kino* No. 1-2, 1933, p. 10).

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