
Notes for a Film of "Capital"

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Notes for a Film of *Capital*

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

TRANSLATED BY MACIEJ SLIWOWSKI, JAY LEYDA, AND ANNETTE MICHELSON

October 12, 1927.

It's settled: we're going to film CAPITAL, on Marx's scenario—the only logical solution.

N.B. Additions . . . those are clips pasted to the wall of montage.¹

October 13, 1927.

. . . To extend the line (and to explicate it, step by step) of dialectical development in my work. Let us recall:

1. STRIKE. The order—educational and methodological film on the methods and processes of class and of underground work. Whence—serial film structure and detachment from a specific place (in the project there's a whole series of escapes, prison life, rebellion, body-searches, *etc.*).

2. POTESKIN. I'm emphasizing, just as the film's direction does, the dialectical result: a pathos of the ordinary and the psychologically concrete: tarpaulin: mourning—*par excellence*. "Suddenly" . . .² the abstract emotion of the lions:³ a [leap] from representation of ordinary life to abstract and generalized imagery.

3. OCTOBER Harnessed lions—speeches of Mensheviks, the bicycles, (N.B. the second derived from the car and motorcycle races that were cut into the mowing sequence of our GENERAL) led to a complete departure from the factual and anecdotal—the events of OCTOBER (in that section) are accepted, **not as**

1. The image is that of the news bulletin affixed to walls of factories and other public places.

2. "Suddenly . . .": the single word of the intertitle immediately preceding the opening shot of that section of Eisenstein's *Potemkin* known as "the Odessa Steps sequence."

3. The sequence in *October* to which Eisenstein here refers is described by him as follows in the essay "A Dialectic Approach to Film Form," in *Film Form, Essays in Film Theory*, edited and translated by Jay Leyda, New York, Harcourt Brace and World, Inc.: "In the thunder of the Potemkin's guns, a marble lion leaps up, in protest against the blood-shed on the Odessa steps. Composed of three shots of three stationary marble lions at the Aluoka Palace in the Crimea: a sleeping lion, an awakening lion, a rising lion. The effect is achieved by a correct calculation of the length of the second shot. Its superimposition on the first shot produces the first action. This establishes time to impress the second position on the mind. Superimposition of the third position on the second produces the second action: the lion finally rises."

events, but as the conclusion of a series of theses; not the fact that the Mensheviks are 'singing' while the battle is in progress (a purely cinematic method of intercutting), but the historical nearsightedness of Menshevism. Not that a sailor finds himself in the bedroom of A[lexandra] F[yodorovna], but rather the "execution of the petite bourgeoisie and that which it represents," *etc.* Not an anecdote about the Wild Division, but "methodology, of propaganda." "In God's Name" becomes a treatise on deity.

After the drama, poem, ballad in film, *OCTOBER* presents a new form of cinema: a collection of essays on a series of themes which constitute *OCTOBER*. Assuming that in any film work, certain salient phrases are given importance, the form of a *discursive* film provides, apart from its unique renewal of strategies, their rationalization which takes these strategies into account. Here's a point of contact already with completely new film perspectives and with the glimmers of possibilities to be realized in *CAPITAL*, a new work on a libretto by Karl Marx. A film treatise.

Nov. 4, evening.

In America even cemeteries are private. 100% Competition. Bribing of doctors, *etc.* The dying receive prospectuses: "Only with us will you find eternal peace in the shade of trees and the murmur of streams," *etc.* (For *C[APITAL]*.)



Stills from *STRIKE*, 1924

Nov. 23, 1927.

We must consider as a basic principle of film-making that which is all-penetrating, down to the smallest detail, a principle no less for the purely technical elements of the general, overall shape.

Such was the case for *POTEMKIN* in the sequence of double attack "ta-ra" in which whole emotional structures as well as 'untrimmed' montage pieces redoubled themselves in intensity. (This is all explained in detail somewhere.) An example of the first type: the waiting scene on the quarterdeck and the scene when the ship awaits the encounter with the fleet.

The de-anecdotalization principle is (**clearly**) fundamental to *OCTOBER*. The working theory of 'overtones'⁴ can literally be reduced to a single proposition. Didactically, in explaining the principles of *OCTOBER*, it's useful and essential, as a development of those principles, to explain the groping stage as well; for *OCTOBER* remains essentially a model of a two-level solution: de-anecdotalization is, in fact, a 'fragment of tomorrow', that is, the premise of the work to follow: C[APITAL].

That is, the very principle of logical reduction *ad limitum* of one fundamental detail.

N.B. Explain this in detail in connection with theme, treatment, *etc.*

Here are Pudovkin's observations on the technique and 'mastery' of OC-



TOBER. Thus: the “non-ordinary, life-like details” (as he puts it), manipulation of detail in montage; *i.e.*: the door opens before Kerensky “eight” times. (In untrimmed shots.)⁵

Together with the ‘profit’ of this device, he also cites the distributor’s trick of ‘getting’ an audience—the so-called Boitler⁶ trick: THE THIEF OF BAGDAD fills the cash register for a month; next month [receipts] decline. He holds the film in an almost empty house for a third month, and the audience then starts to pour in again for six consecutive months.

He describes, in similar terms, his perception (or more exactly—the audience’s subconscious perception): a normal perception occurs, and then there’s a break in the perception of something outside the logic of the ordinary. This moment is held, and then, at a given moment, a restructuring of ordinary perception takes place—and this is particularly powerful in its effect. *Voyez!* From a technical cut, through social interpretation, to the distribution trick, everything’s part of the same. *Fabelhaft!*

For C[APITAL], a puppet theater must be shot, but only (God help us!) in

4. The use of the notion of the overtone develops at a particular stage in the extension and radicalization of Eisenstein’s theory and practice of montage, that of work on *The General Line* (retitled *The old and the New*), described in Eisenstein’s essay, “The Filmic Fourth Dimension” as “the first film edited on the principle of the visual overtone. The montage of *Old and New* is constructed with this particular method. This montage is built, not on particular dominants, but takes as its guide the total stimulation through all stimuli. That is the original montage complex within the shot, arising from the collision and combination of the individual stimuli inherent in it.

“These stimuli are heterogeneous as regards their ‘external natures,’ but their reflex-physiological essence binds them together in an iron unity. Physiological in so far as they are ‘psychic’ in perception, this is merely the physiological process of a *higher nervous activity*.

“In this way, behind the general indication of the shot, the physiological summary of its vibrations as a *whole*, as a complex unity of the manifestations of all its stimuli, is present. This is the peculiar ‘feeling’ of the shot, produced by the shot as a whole. . . . As in that music which builds its works on a two-fold use of overtones.” (The musical references cited elsewhere in this same text are to Debussy and Scriabin.)

5. Pudovkin is citing a fragment of a major sequence in Eisenstein’s *October*, known as “The Ascent of Kerensky” in which the shape and dynamics of the Menshevik leader’s career are epitomized. This sequence, brilliant in its use of temporal and spatial distension, constitutes a visual trope of extreme irony, sharply comic in effect. Eisenstein will refer to it from time to time in these journal entries. Here is his description of it, drawn from “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form,” as an example of intellectual cinema: “. . . Kerensky’s rise to power and dictatorship after July uprising of 1917. A comic effect was gained by sub-titles indicating regular ascending ranks (“Dictator”—“Generalissimo”—“Minister of Navy—and of Army”—*etc.*) climbing higher and higher, cut into five or six shots of Kerensky, climbing the stairs of the Winter Palace, all with exactly the same pace. Here a conflict between the flummery of the ascending ranks and the ‘hero’s’ trotting up the same unchanging flight of stairs yields an intellectual result: Kerensky’s essential nonentity is shown satirically. We have the counterpoint of a literally expressed conventional idea with the pictured action of a particular person who is unequal to his swiftly increasing duties. The incongruence of these two factors results in the spectator’s purely intellectual decision at the expense of this particular person. Intellectual dynamisation.”

6. Mikhail Boitler was a former comic film actor, strongly influenced by Chaplin. Forced into retirement by the importation of Chaplin’s films into the Soviet Union, he became director of a theatre specializing in the presentation of American films.

the manner which first comes to mind (as in a Daumier lithograph: Louis Philippe and the parliament—*Le capitaliste et ses jouets*). Exclusively through parallelism or a device that fits the circumstances.

Jan. 2, 1928.

For CAPITAL. Stock exchange to be rendered not as 'a Stock Exchange' (MABUSE, ST. PETERSBURG), but as thousands of 'tiny details'. Like a genre painting. For this, see Zola (*L'argent*). *Curé*—the main 'broker' for the whole area. The concierge—the negotiator of loans. The pressure of concierges like these in the problem of the Sov[iet] Union's acknowledgement of debts.

The very same audience held together by a patriotic theme. The idea of Revenge is Krupp's idea through the newspaper, *Le Figaro*, financed by him. In general, France *ausschlaggebend* for petit-bourgeois, philistine material. (On Krupp—following the lecture on French press by Charles Rappoport reported in *Vecherka*.⁷)

March 8.

Yesterday thought a lot about CAPITAL. About the structure 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").

The working draft.

Take a trivial progressive chain of development of some action . . . For instance: one day in a man's life. *Minutieusement* set forth as an outline which makes us aware of departure from it. For that purpose only. Only as the critique of the development of associative order of social conventions, generalizations and theses of CAPITAL.

Generalizations, from given cases to ideas (this will be completely primitive, especially if we move in a line from bread shortages to the grain shortage [and] the mechanics of speculation. And here, from a button to the theme of overproduction, but more clearly and neatly.)

In Joyce's ULYSSES there is a remarkable chapter of this kind, written in the manner of a scholastic catechism. Questions are asked and answers given.

The subject of the questions is how to light a Bunsen burner.

The answers, however, are metaphysical. (Read this chapter. It might be methodologically useful.) Thanks to Ivy Valterovna Litvinova.

March 9, 1928.

Yesterday's writing for CAPITAL very good. Still must find an adequate triviality for the 'spinal' theme.

Dreams about emperor. *Le Figaro* describes an interesting episode clearly illustrating the way in which the French bourgeoisie yearns for a king. The

7. *VECHERNAYA MOSKVA*, an evening newspaper.

newspaper draws a striking picture of the “evening ball of the First Empire” organized a few weeks ago at Baron Pichon’s splendid residence on the *Quai d’Anjou*. Guns of Austerlitz roared, attracting mobs of passers-by. Torches burned. Antique coaches, conveying famous historic personalities, rolled up the driveway. At nine in the evening Napoleon arrived with his entourage. He was met in the court by the imperial guard. The Austrian envoy presented himself. Napoleon and his spouse ascended the stairs. The ball, which was also attended by Prince Joachim Murat, the Count and Countess de Massa, Albufer and other historic figures, began. The newspaper mentions bitterly that the splendor of that evening was all a show, and that the Emperor and his suite were only Pichon’s friends and acquaintances in make-up. (*Vecherka*, March 8, 1928.)

March 17, 1928.

On the level of ‘historical materialism’, current equivalents of historical turning points with a contemporary orientation must be sought. In CAPITAL, for example, the themes of textile machines and machine-wreckers should collide: electric streetcar in Shanghai and thousands of coolies thereby deprived of bread, lying down on the tracks—to die.

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. The best exposure of the theme of clergy and cult.

An economic invasion and construction of new cities. *Hansa-Bund*. To be interestingly demonstrated, perhaps, through the *makhnovshchina* episode.⁸ Guliai-Pole, a lost hole, setting up jewelry stores within a week, hiding the filth of its streets with carpets and becoming, if not a little Paris, then at least a miniature Vienna. Influx of emigrants and predatory elements (from the book on Makhno). Cortezian and Pissarresque soldiery⁹ is also linked. (Or for conveying the idea from another point of view.)

March 24, 1928.

A great episode, from Paris. A war victim. Legless man on a cart commits suicide—he throws himself into the water. Told by Max,¹⁰ as recounted by some newspaper.

8. The reference is to the counter-revolutionary episodes in the Ukraine under the leadership of Makhno.

9. This would indicate an already existing interest in Eisenstein’s part in the history of the Mexican Conquest. This was to flower two years later in the major, uncompleted film project known as *Che Viva Mexico*, undertaken after Eisenstein’s sojourn in Hollywood and preceding his return, in 1931, to the Soviet Union.

10. Maxim Straukh, the actor, a childhood friend and frequent co-worker. Their collaboration began at the time of Eisenstein’s early theatrical productions for the Proletkult Theater.

The bridge sequence from OCTOBER
(continues through page 16)



The most important thing ‘in life’ now is to draw **conclusions** from formal aspects of OCTOBER.

It is very interesting that “gods” and “Kerensky’s ascent” are structurally one and the same: the latter—identity of fragments and semantic *crescendo* of the intertitles; and the first—identity (implied) of the intertitles “God,” “God,” “God,” and semantic *diminuendo* from the material. Series of meanings. These are surely some kind of first indications of the method’s devices. It is interesting that these things can have no existence outside the meaning, the theme (unlike, for instance, the lifting ‘bridge’ which can function *überhaupt*). An abstract formal experiment is **inconceivable** here. As in montage in general.

Experiment external to the thesis is impossible. (Take this into consideration.)

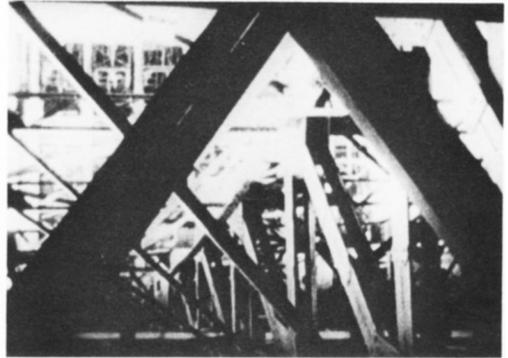
March 31, 1928. 1 a.m.

School and church are obligatory in CAPITAL. *Voyez Barbusse: Faits divers, l’Instituteur*. On the whole, an amazing book. I am ready to take back all [my] wicked remarks on Barbusse. Read for three hours on end, and at night, too. A lot of things indispensable for CAPITAL.

The form of *faits divers* or collections of short film-essays is fully appropriate for replacement of ‘whole’ works . . . Something that’s in STRIKE has the vats episode as a wedging of pure American comedy into a great, dark work. I remember how I reasoned that after four dark sections [the audience] would be tired and one would have to offer a comic *détention des nerfs* [sic] to intensify perception of the final sections.

April 2-3, 1928, night.

Somewhere in the West. A factory where it is possible to pinch parts and tools. No search of workers made. Instead, the exit gate is a **magnetic** check point. No comment needed. (Max read this somewhere. Will go into CAPITAL.)



April 4, 1928.

“... The ironic part outweighs the pathetic one. The German romantics already knew the advantage of irony over pathos. For purposes of intensification, **pathos had to be made fantastic and hyperbolic**. The living historical material did not allow that, however. The picture therefore revealed a split.” (Leningrad newspaper *Kino*, discussion on OCTOBER, article by M. Bleiman.)

In connection with CAPITAL, ‘stimuli’, that is, suggestive materials, should be introduced. So, for instance, that excerpt from Bleiman suggests elements for pathos in CAPITAL (Say, for the last ‘chapter’—dialectical method in practical class struggle).

In those ‘great days’ I noted on a scrap of paper that in the new cinema, the established place of eternal themes (academic themes of LOVE AND DUTY, FATHERS AND SONS, TRIUMPH OF VIRTUES, *etc.*) will be taken by a series of pictures on the subjects of ‘basic methods’. The content of CAPITAL (its aim) is now formulated: **to teach the worker to think dialectically**.

To show the **method** of dialectics. This would mean (roughly) five-nonfigurative chapters. (Or six, seven, *etc.*) Dialectical analysis of historical events. Dialectics in scientific problems. Dialectics of class struggle (the last chapter).

“An analysis of a centimeter of silk stocking.” (About the silk stocking as **such**, Grisha¹¹ copied out from somewhere—the silk manufacturers’ fight for the short skirt. I added the competitors—the textile masters’ for long skirts. Morality. Clergy, *etc.*)

Still very complicated to think ‘somehow’ in ‘extra-thematic’ imagery. But no problem . . . *ça viendra!*

11. G.V. Alexandrov, friend and collaborator of Eisenstein, listed as co-scenarist for *October*, *The General Line* and *Que Viva Mexico*. Their collaboration ceased after their return to the Soviet Union from the United States, and Alexandrov turned to the direction of film, specializing in comedy.



It's very interesting—about size. Perfectly new inter-relation between quantity and diversity of material in relation to the footage. “Overloading of the footage.” (In answer to Grisha’s apprehension—“What? China and America, too?” *etc., etc.*) The same in B. Gusman’s text:

“The nature of cinematic language is such that effective presentation of a **brief** and consequently **insignificant** event requires, more than in any other art form, a great number of visual devices. **What in literature can be indicated by a few words, is conveyed on screen by a whole series of scenes and sometimes, even, of episodes, occupying a large section of the picture.** That’s why BATTLESHIP “POTEMKIN” makes a much greater impression than OCTOBER . . . Indeed, what lingers in one’s memory after seeing OCTOBER? One should probably acknowledge the depiction of the raising of the bridge as one of the most brilliant passages. Why? Because film language is completely revealed. And, to be exact, because the space Eisenstein allots to the showing of the bridges is disproportionately large (and Eisenstein could not have done otherwise, the very essence of cinema demanded it), he lacks footage to ‘cinematize’ the entirety of the October Revolution’s series of extremely significant and vital aspects.”

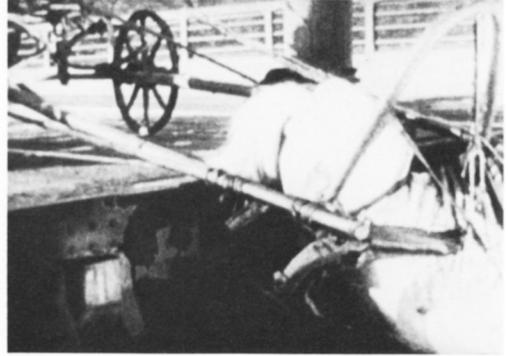
That statement about ‘kilo’-footage of forceful representation of the trivial event is absolutely right. One might call them factual **units**. This is fully applicable to the **methods** of ‘yesterday’s’ cinema.

From the point of view of **language!!** We are, after all, primarily after **economy of means** (by no means beyond our means). Where, if not in **directness**, shall we find it?)

Footage goes into effective presentation of **event unit**. Just as it will be used for disclosure (‘giving shape’) of the unit of **thought**. Which in terms of ‘plot’ corresponds to an event as unit in old cinema.

If POTEMKIN . . . was allowed one half or one whole event to each part (*i.e.*, mourning—meeting, flag; ‘*paskha*’¹²—the steps; pause—tarpaulin—mutiny,

12. A traditional Easter delicacy in the form of a cake.



etc.), then, for this project, **one idea** (and this means ‘impressing’, not ‘chewing over’ the event *entre parenthèses*—‘mourning’, ‘pause’, ‘battle readiness’, ‘panic’, *etc.*) to each part as there is one feeling to one whole or one half part, is just fine. The difference lies in the attractions¹³ directed towards stimulating one concept, condensed (in this case) in terms of class, and the attractions directed towards arousing one’s class-oriented emotion, (as in the previous case).

The difference (confusing in a comparison) is that of the **area** in which the attractions (that is, the montage elements) must produce the given **single effect**.

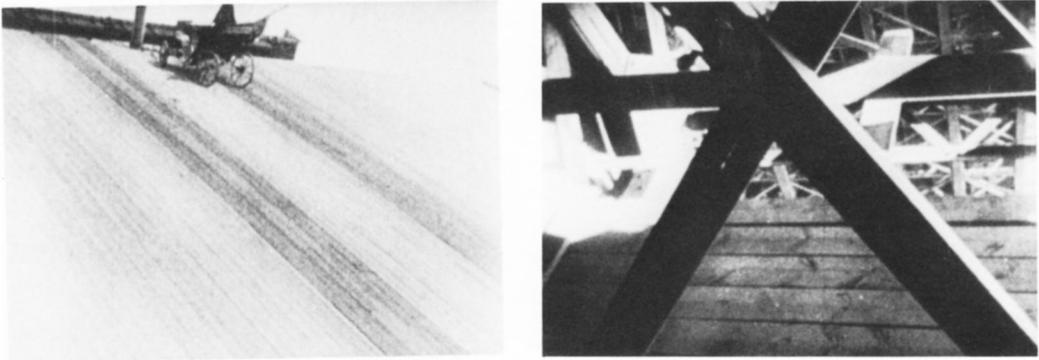
Sensuous attractions are assembled on the principle of a single emotion (“a sad old man,” + “a sail being lowered,” + “a forward tendency,” + “fingers playing with a hat,” + “tears in the eyes,” *etc.*) There is a distinct ‘similarity’.

The ‘similarity’ of intellectual attractions 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**. A *balalaika* and a Menshevik ‘resemble’ each other not physically but abstractly.

China, pyramids, New York, all that frightened Grisha, are not really **themes**, but montage fragments for forming **thoughts**. They correspond to close-ups and medium shots of a single event.

13. The genesis of Eisenstein’s theory and style of montage is presented in “Through Theater to Cinema.” “I think that first and foremost we must give the credit to the basic principles of the circus and the music-hall—for which I had had a passionate love since childhood Under the influence of the French comedians, and of Chaplin (of whom we had only heard), and the first news of the fox-trot and jazz, this early love thrived.

“The music-hall clement was obviously needed at the time for the emergence of a ‘montage form of thought.’ Harlequin’s parti-coloured costume grew and spread, first over the structure of the program, and finally into the method of the whole production.” Another popular source, cited by Eisenstein and his companions of the early years, was the form of the amusement park ‘attraction’, whose intensity of physical stimulus he assimilated into his aesthetic of dynamic conflict, drawing theoretical support from Pavlovian reflexology.



(N.B. *Abgesehen* from rules of 'spelling', that is of the montage ABC: a single fragment of meaning = *minimum* of two in montage. One fragment is **not, after all, visible**; the first is used for surprise, the second for perception.)

We say, one shot, "China," corresponds to the 'central' shot¹⁴ of the horse on the bridge. Naturally, this will be five shots (or more). But one must remember that these are (taken) not to **explain China** but to explain one's main idea, Egypt, by use of this one shot in conjunction with the others, like those of New York: Egypt.

That shot is as unequivocal in this place as the shot of the sad old man is emotionally unequivocal.

This new outlook on things and events revealed itself with utmost clarity during a 'local' discussion:

Grisha: We will be in New York, in China, in Egypt (will expand in all directions). Mountains of material, *etc.*

I objected that we will not, after all, be seeking a **sensuous re-creation** of China or whatever, as we came to do in the case of the **battleship, factory, midday, etc.**

A sensuous re-creation calls for 'footage' (here Gusman is correct, but barbarically ascribes to it the concept of 'language').

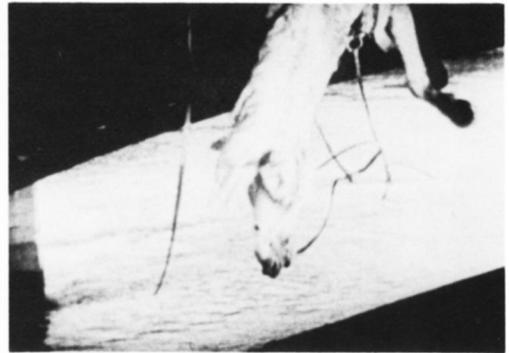
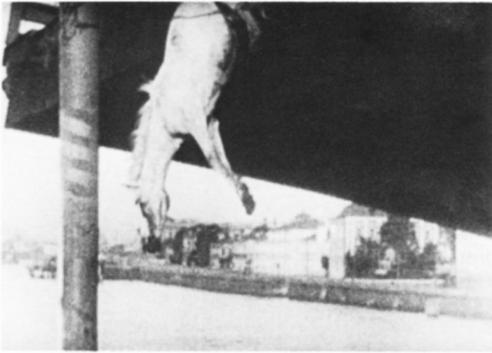
N.B. I recall how I talked about OCTOBER at *Glavrepertkom*,¹⁵ saying that Sovkino had not given 8,000 meters for additional shooting of the village and countryside. They expressed doubt: if it did not 'fit' into 500,000, how could it be done for [the other] 8? I said, the footage is not used for **meaning**. The footage is used for an emotional priming.

The only principle derived from past experience and now applicable as the general rule:

"That picture is cinematic whose story can be told in two words."

14. The sequence to which the cited shot is central constitutes the supreme example of spatio-temporal distension and synthesis developed in *October*. It is analyzed and discussed at length in my "Camera Lucida/Camera Obscura," *Artforum*, XII (January, 1973).

15. The governmental agency responsible for resolution of practical problems in film production.



If the picture ‘articulates’ one or two thoughts, cinematizes ‘a method’, then this corresponds to the whole part placed ‘under’ the dominant of grief; that is, to brilliant film-conditioning. So, having China, India and the devil knows what else is not really so terrible.

Furthermore, one realizes that without even chasing around after the flavor of Egypt, the whole of CAPITAL could be ‘constructed’ on a set. *Schuftan*.¹⁶ Glass. Model. It could be shot at the **Third Factory** [of Goskino]!!!¹⁷

N.B. This is obviously exaggeration to the point of paradox. *Walkenkratzer aus Vogelschau* and, on the whole, a terrific attraction of the **frame in itself** (sensuous attraction) that is, of the frame apart from its burden of meaning (intellectual attraction), is absolutely mandatory in this case. Why then, emotionalize we will; we must, *quand même*, mustn’t we?

Non-fictional, then; not educational but absorbing and propagandistic.

To “Kerensky”—a maximal reaction: applause, laughter.

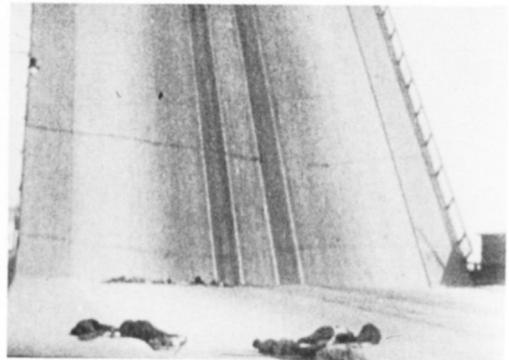
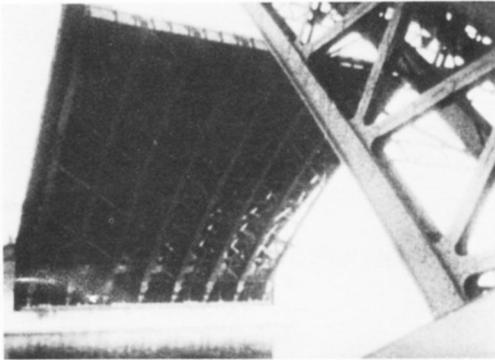
The Gods: perhaps the most sophisticated [structure] and the material which produces an effect with the most impressive image. Their formal selection (that is *abgesehen* from the ‘philosophical’ burden of meaning) and the formal parallelism constitute the academically brilliant, sensuously attractive montage.

Revenons à nos moutons. Film language is not **terrifying as far as footage is concerned**. On the contrary, it is the maximally succinct expressive mode; within fifteen meters the idea of Deity disqualifies itself;¹⁸ it requires, at least, much less effort to make it physiologically persuasive.

16. The Schuftan Effect, invented in 1925 by Eugene Schuftan, cameraman, is an illusionistic process designed to perfect, through the use of reduced models drawn on glass, the integration of *décor* into film. It thereby reduced the necessity of shooting on location.

17. A small and ill-equipped film studio in Moscow.

18. This celebrated sequence of *October* was conceived and is frequently cited by Eisenstein as the structural model for “intellectual montage.” An account of it is given in “A Dialectic Approach to Film Form:” “Kornilov’s march on Petrograd was under the banner of ‘In the Name of God and Country.’ Here we attempted to reveal the religious significance of this episode in a rationalistic way. A number of religious images, from a magnificent Baroque Christ to an Eskimo idol, were cut together.



April 6, 1928.

The first, preliminary **structural** draft of CAPITAL would mean taking a banal development of a perfectly unrelated event. Say, "A day in a man's life," or something perhaps even more banal.¹⁹ And the elements of this chain serve as points of departure for the forming of associations through which alone the play of concepts becomes possible. The idea of this banal intrigue was arrived at in a truly constructive manner.

Association presupposes a stimulus. Give a series of these, without which there is 'nothing' to associate. The maximum abstractness of an expanding idea appears particularly bold when presented as an offshoot from extreme concreteness—the banality of life. Something suggested in ULYSSES provides additional support for the same formulation:

"... *Nicht genug! Ein anderen Kapitel ist im Stil der Bücher für junge Mädchen geschrieben, ein anderes besteht, nach dem Vorbild der scholastischen Traktate, nur aus Frage und Antwort: Die Fragen beziehen sich auf die Art, wie Mann einen Teekessel zum Kochen bringt, und die Antworten schwiften ins grosse Kosmische und Philosophische ab . . .*" (Ivan Goll, *Literarische Welt*, Berlin: taken from a prospectus on ULYSSES [Rhein Verlag]).²⁰

Joyce may be helpful for my purpose: from a bowl of soup to the British vessels sunk by England.

The conflict in this case was between the concept and the symbolisation of God. While idea and image appear to accord completely in the first statue shown, the two elements move further from each other with each successive image. Maintaining the denotation of 'God', the images increasingly disagree with our concept of God, inevitably leading to individual conclusions about the true nature of all deities. In this case, too, a chain of images attempted to achieve a purely intellectual resolution, resulting from a conflict between a preconception and a gradual discrediting of it in purposeful steps."

19. This theme was, at the time of Eisenstein's writing, entering the tradition of film. Its supreme and most complex exemplification, Vertov's *The Man With the Movie Camera* was, in fact, in the stage of completion.

20. "... Not enough! Another chapter is written in the style of books for young girls, another in the form of scholarly tracts, composed only of questions and answers; the questions are of the sort, how to bring a teakettle to the boiling point, and the answers digress into great cosmic and philosophical . . ."



As a further intention: the setting of CAPITAL develops as visual instruction in the dialectical method.

Stylistically, this closed plot line, whose every moment serves as a point of departure towards materials that are both ideologically defined and physically dissociated, provides maximum contrast as well.

The final chapter should certainly produce a **dialectical decoding** of the very same story **irrespective** of the real theme. *Der grössten Speisung!* By means of which the 'beautiful' stylistic organicity of the work as a whole is accomplished.

Of course, this is quite conceivable even without a series of this kind (not through plot at all, but simply connected). Paradoxically, however, a deliberate 'small step back' from the final form always emphasizes brilliance of construction. Thus, it was good that THE WISE MAN was not simply a *revue*, but revised **Ostrovsky!**

The sequential arranging of the 'distancing elements' could eventually proceed quite differently as well. The final chapter is on the class struggle; the little story should therefore be constructed to gain maximum advantage from its dialectical disclosure.

The elements of the *historiette* itself are thus chiefly those which, in the form of puns, provide the impulse towards abstraction and generalization (mechanical spring-boards for patterns of dialectical attitudes towards events). The *historiette* as a whole: the material for a dialectical disclosure through an overwhelmingly passionate final section. This, too, [should be built up] in as gray and banal a manner as possible.

I.e., just as the 'house-wifely virtues' of a German worker's wife constitute the greatest evil, the strongest obstacle to a revolutionary uprising, given the German context. A German worker's wife will always have something warm for her husband, will never let him go **completely** hungry. And there is the root of her negative role which slows the pace of social development. In the plot, this could take the form of **'hot slop'**, and the meaning of this on 'a world scale'. One great danger: not to succumb to *niaiserie* through excessive 'oversimplification': "it's in the bag" . . .

April 7,

Today, with a banal relapse into the circular composition of Scheherezade, Tūt-nāmeḥ,²¹ tales of Hauff. I explained to Grisha the mechanics of the CAPITAL project in outline while in the 'A' streetcar between Strasnaia and Petrovsky Gate (or perhaps after Nikitsky—I don't remember . . .). While riding home from Shub's²² where we'd had chocolate with *paskha* and cake . . .

Voici:

Throughout the entire picture the wife cooks soup for her returning husband. N.B. Could be two themes intercut for association: the soup-cooking wife and the home-returning husband. Completely idiotic (all right in the first stages of a working hypothesis): in the third part (for instance), association moves from the pepper with which she seasons food. Pepper. Cayenne. Devil's Island. Dreyfus. French chauvinism. *Figaro* in Krupp's hands. War. Ships sunk in the port. (Obviously, not in such quantity!!) N.B. Good in its non-banality—transition: **pepper—Dreyfus—Figaro**. It would be good to cover the sunken English ships (according to Kushner, 103 DAYS ABROAD) with the lid of a saucepan. It could even be not pepper—but kerosene for a stove and transition into *oil*.²³

Chapter 4 (5, *etc.*; but the **next to the last**—comic, farcical):

Woman's stocking full of holes and a silk one in a newspaper advertisement. It starts with a jerky movement, to multiply into 50 pairs of legs—Revue. Silk. Art. The fight for the centimeter of silk stocking. The aesthetes are for it. The Bishops and morality are against. *Mais ces pantins* dance on strings pulled by the silk manufacturers and the garment peddlers who fight each other. Art. Holy art. Morality. Holy morality.

In the final section, soup is ready. A thin soup. The husband arrives. 'Socially' embittered. The hot, watery liquid—compromisingly washes away the pathos. Prospects of bloody skirmishes. And most horrifying of all—social indifference [equal] to social betrayal. Blood, the world in the flames of cataclysm. The Salvation Army. The Church Militant, *etc.* The man embraces his wife's skeleton. A neatly darned quilt is pulled over. A 'Surprise' (for sincere lyricism)—she gives him a cheap cigarette. Sentimentality that is much more awful in the context of that final horror. The quilt pulled over. Under the bed—a pot. With the handle broken off. But a pot, all the same . . .

For the time being, after Tūt-nāmeḥ, this may be revolting. Here and there, though—not bad. Diversify the parts with the **material** as sharply as is appropriate

21. Translated as *Tales of the Parrot*, these are Persian texts in the Moghul style, School of Akbar (1556-1605).

22. Esther Shub, the distinguished documentary film-maker, virtually the inventor of the compilation film. A long-time friend of Eisenstein she had, in fact, given his his very first employment in the editing of Lang's *Mabuse der Spieler*, for distribution in the Soviet Union. His apprenticeship under this accomplished editor was extremely important for the development of his own work.

23. Eisenstein here suggests the depiction of a process of production in reverse, adding to his store of tropes the *hysteron proteron*, so frequently and successfully employed by Vertov.

and bring them to conclusion. Of a class nature.

Problem of volume of material which can fit in. To be solved by an incredible **succinctness** and by treating each part entirely **in its own way**. Perhaps one part even 'acted' with two characters—*ganz fein*. Another one, all from newsreels. *Etc.*

The character of the material presented calls for economy. The 'ancient' cinema was shooting **one event from many points of view**. The new one assembles **one point** of view from many events.

N.B. What will it be like in practice?—*qui vivra verra!*

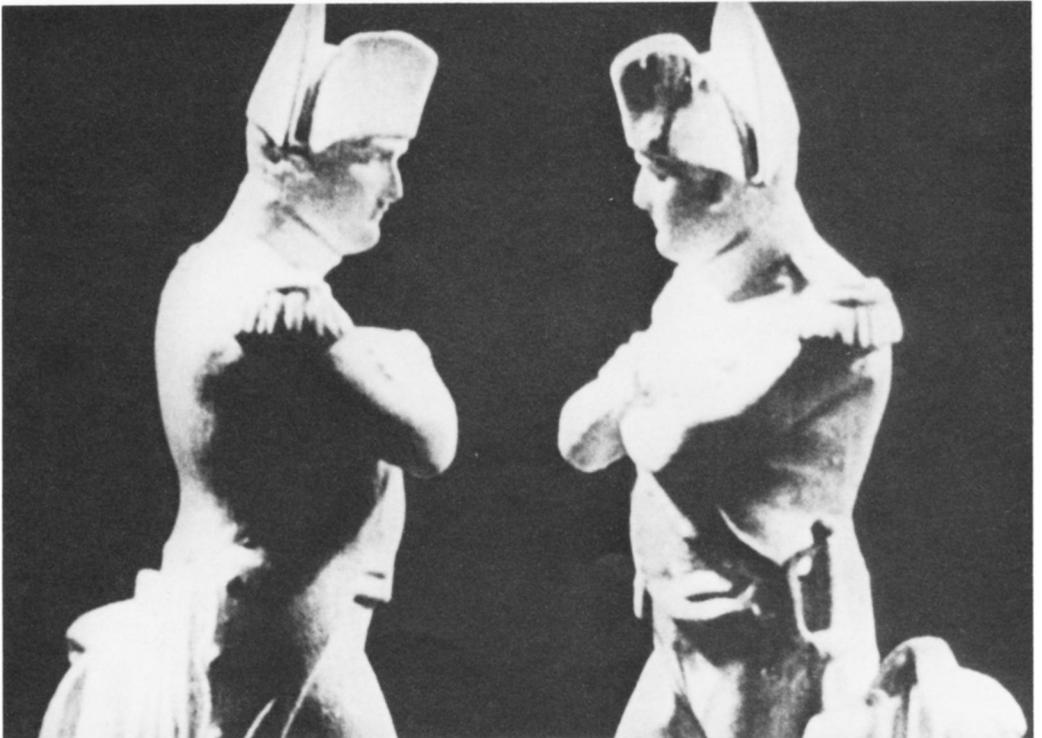
After all, "the Gods" were condensed into something like 15 meters!

N.B. Everything has been written in **monstrous** doubt. It is still very reactionary! And it may be stylistically suitable only for an individual case. Cases far more 'to the left' (like the "Gods") are needed.

April 7, 1:30 a.m.

There must be one chapter on the materialist interpretation of the 'soul'. The chapter on reflexes. The whole of it could be built around that woman and the

"For God and Country," sequence from OCTOBER
(continues through page 23)



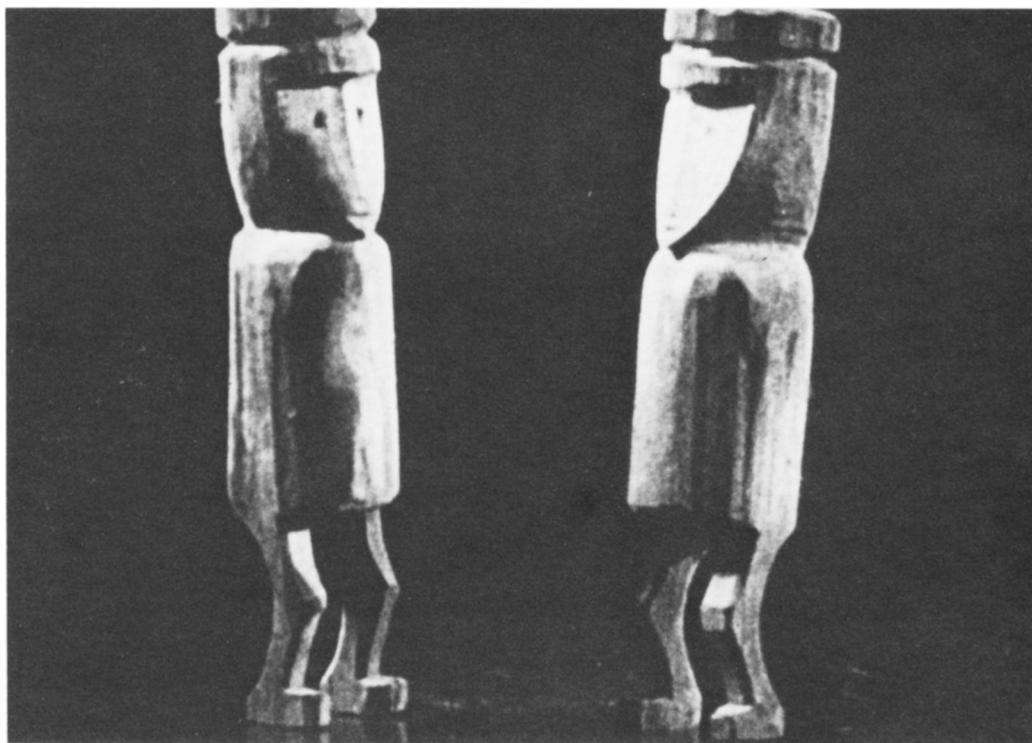
series of reflexes. Motor ones. Erotic. Purely mechanical. A complex series of conditioned reflexes. With a demonstration of the mechanisms of associative thinking, *etc.*

To expose the mechanisms of the states of a soul with, say, emotions evoked by a funeral procession. The loss of the male. The loss of the bread-winner. The heirs, *etc.* And all this cynicism is assembled in reverse to form a touching mourners' procession.

Provoke a head-on collision between a **stimulus** and the **final link** of a complex chain of conditioned reflexes. There no longer seems to be any interconnection. Terribly crude, physical stimulus (particularly bad—the erotic one!)—and, as the final link, some act of an extremely elevated (resp[ectively] sacrificial) spirituality.

N.B. It would be really funny to cast Khokhlova²⁴ as that woman. She might

24. Alexandra Khokhlova was a leading film actress of the Soviet cinema. Her exceptional talent, intelligence and versatility illuminate, in particular, the films of her husband, Lev Kuleshov, the director and theorist of montage, the consideration of whose work is, in turn, important for a thorough understanding of Eisenstein's own development.



be very amusing as someone ugly becoming a beauty.

And then, in a gathering of momentum, reproduce the mechanics of irritation. Then guide the audience through a series of film stimuli to a definite emotional effect, and then give the intertitle:

Well then, now you have reached the state . . . , *etc., etc.* To each chapter—its own principles of film adaptation. (1:45 a.m.)

April 7 evening.

In **PROJECTOR** No. 14 (132), Grosz's autobiography:

"I already had a disturbing feeling at that time that I should try to express and render in painting something similar to that which Zola was expressing in his work. . . .

"I want to start a whole cycle of pictures of this sort, which, as a delightful phrase of artists' slang has it, **one would like to try with one's tongue . . .**"

And here, from the same source, for **CAPITAL**:

" . . . it was a delightful time, when everything was saturated in the symbolism of war, when every jar of artificial honey was decorated with an 'iron cross,



second class'; when 'God Punish England!' was pasted on the back of every letter . . . When old leather suitcases were made into soldiers' boots and army 'mousse' was so corrosive that it made holes in the tablecloth. Only the human stomach could withstand all that! . . ."

N.B. It would be good to show kids guzzling the 'mousse' and its droplets eating away the tablecloth.

Here, too, (according to Ermler's stories about Berlin)—the coasters for beer mugs which read, "Germany cannot survive without colonies. Rice, pepper, *etc.*—we get everything from the colonies. England took the colonies away from us, *etc.*"

April 8.

CAPITAL will be dedicated—officially—to The Second International! They're sure to be 'overjoyed'! For it is hard to conceive of any more devastating attack against social democracy in all its aspects than CAPITAL.

The formal side is dedicated to Joyce.



The outline of events in historical order. For instance, in the farcical section, a dissolve from contemporary bishopric to Boccacciesque and La Fontainesque-Rabelaisian clergy. By no means 'sequentially' but *durcheinander*. The mannequins and costuming of the church are, after all, still sluggishly medieval, like all their teaching.

The continuity of a series should by no means be 'sequential' as in a plot—unfolding in a logically progressive manner, *etc.* An **associative unfolding**. Then the footage not frightening. Sometimes *les débris d'action* deliberately plot-like and continuous. Only not "the silk manufacturer plying a bishop with drink." Fie!!

Along the Dreyfus line. The trial shown as Daumier's *ventre législatif*. All the cardinal sins in judicial *typage*.²⁵ Or, even better, a single one, ten-fold, all-

25. The concept complementary to that of montage in Eisenstein's theory and practice. *Typage* refers to the parameter of acting, and, by extension, to the pro-filmic aspect of cinema. "I want to point out that 'typage' must be understood as broader than merely a face without make-up, or a substitution



embracing. Then, it all **turns out** to be hanging by strings. The hand of the General Staff or something of that sort *fait sauter les pantins*. (In *Chambre constitutionnelle* and *Louis Philippe* by Daumier!)

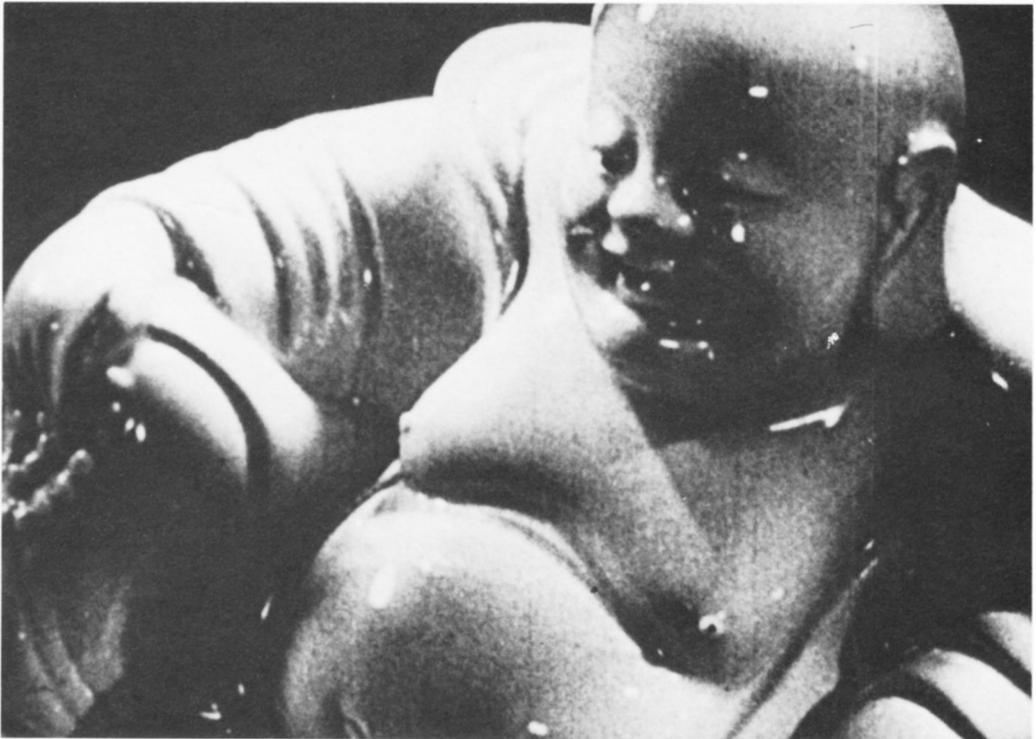
In a scheme of this sort, parallelisms—parallel currents—have been **transformed** into a progressively associative series. **Very important.**

It would be good to move from the marionettes to a puppet theater for children (many **fine** kinds) with chauvinistic puppets—training in chauvinism from the cradle—and then to the *Gott-strafe-England* herd-like movement.

There are endlessly possible themes for filming in CAPITAL ('price', 'income', 'rent')—for us, the theme is **Marx's method**.

CAPITAL, in these rough drafts, **does not exhaust all new possibilities**. Must

of 'naturally expressive' types for actors. In my opinion, 'typage' included a specific approach to the events embraced by the content of the film. Here again was the method of east interference with the natural course and the combination of events. In concept, from beginning to end, *October* is pure 'typage'.



remember that very firmly. Perhaps, though, it should be explicated **at this stage**. Grisha says that our draft is still **generally accessible** in its 'virginal' state. We are therefore beginning to convert it into something accessible only *pour les raffinés*. It might therefore be reasonable not to invert everything to the very end. This should be done later, instead.

... A proper structure for the OCTOBER stage—in part, a newsreel along with two or three 'emotional' concentrations within the limits of that footage ('the bridge' and 'ascent'). Also think **about the emotional concentrations** within the sections of CAPITAL. But try, nevertheless, to make them *à la* ascent of Kerensky—using those principles and not ancient ones of the bridge.

Absolutely special will be the problem of the image and frame composition for CAPITAL. The ideology of the unequivocal frame must be thoroughly reconsidered. How, I can't yet tell. Experimental work is needed. For that, it's 'madly' necessary first to make THE GLASS HOUSE,²⁶ in which the (usual) idea of the **frame** is what happens to the **structure of things** in the fragments of OCTOBER and in CAPITAL's entire structure.

There is still another variant instead of **soup**—in case CAPITAL is restricted (in its basic 'intrigue') to the 'world scale' and the Second International to the 'pedagogic' framework of USSR boundaries. Show the way in which our slovenliness (absenteeism, hooliganism, *etc.*) is a social betrayal of the working class as a whole. True, this is very harsh and less monumental. It's therefore more important, socially, to strike the traitorous front in its entirety.

April 11.

On repetition.

In terms of dialectical analysis, that is, analysis in contradictions, a procedure of this sort is very good. We had it to some extent in "The offensive of June 18" (*nach meinem Kompositionsvorschlag*):

June 18—the victorious regiments; June 18—the horror of exploding shells; June 18—Plekhanov's patriotic demonstration at Kazan Cathedral; June 18—relentless armored cars pursue the X regiment in an attack; June 18—innumerable protest demonstrations leave the factories; June 18—the shock battalions prance, *etc., etc., etc.*; June 18—a body hanging, suspended on [telegraph?] wire.

This is obviously a model of dialectical demonstration. Not realized. Very sorry.

Notez once again the unity of the intertitles!!! Just as in "The Gods" and (in

26. *The Glass House* was a project of Eisenstein's, conceived in 1926 and developed parallel to the filming of *October* and the planning of *Capital*. The action of this satire on bourgeois society was to have taken place in a building whose walls, ceilings and floors were made of glass. In this text, one experimental possibility of the project is considered: the inclusion within one frame of several actions.

reverse) in Kerensky.

On this level, one could solve:

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—art.

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—morality.

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—commerce and competition.

Ein Paar seidene Strumpfe—Indian women forced to incubate the silk cocoon by carrying them in **their armpits!**

April 20, 1928.

What happens to the ‘immaculate maidens’ *du moment* I start to speak about CAPITAL and intellectual attraction! The secretary of the Artistic Council of Sovkino *d’un côte* (komsomol) and an old Polish underground activist *de l’autre*. They both dissuade. Both—absolutely capable of ecstasy. They support emotionalism in my work. They speak about ‘warmth which must be preserved in my work. To create . . . *Très drôle*. Those ‘pure in heart’—do they speak truth?

I think that intellectual attraction by no means excludes ‘emotionality’. After all, a reflex action is perceived as the so-called presence of an affect. The question of paths of influence and perspective of *des zur Offenbarung Möglichen*—possibilities in the area of the expressible—thanks to those specifically new paths. **Preservation** of the evolutionary effect is **mandatory** and not at all excluded in practice: *i.e.*, Kerensky *steigt* has its own *Lachsalven!*

April 22.

Ogonek No. 17, April 22, 1928 brought out for C[APITAL] and in general:

A mailbox for foundlings. In Athens on a street near an orphanage, a box has been placed in which mothers can leave their babies. The baby immediately finds himself on a little mattress. Every two hours the box is checked and the contents are taken to the orphanage. This perfected abandonment of babies has, in addition to its originality, certain drawbacks. Just imagine, for instance, that three babies are abandoned within two hours. The first one is not going to feel too good. [Drawing of the box.]

Absolutely brilliant material, ‘compressible’ to the point of ‘bloody irony’. Bourgeois culture and philanthropy.

“In the domain of culture, the professional and technological achievements of bourgeois art are great. Particularly important for the proletariat are the achievements of recent decades, in which methods of planned and constructive approach to artistic creation, lost to artists as representatives of the *petite bourgeoisie*, have been restored and raised to the level of scientific analysis and synthesis. The process then instituting the penetration of the creative process by dialectical and materialist principles, as yet unrealized by artists, constitutes the raw stuff of a future proletarian art.”

This was a major contribution to an analysis of the arts.

The tragedy of today's 'leftists' consists in the fact that the still incomplete analytic process finds itself in a situation in which synthesis is demanded . . .

On new themes. It was actually important to show **tactics** in **OCTOBER**, and not the events. The most important tasks in a cultural revolution are not only **dialectical demonstrations but instruction in the dialectical method**, as well.

Given the available data on cinema, such tasks are not yet permissible. Cinema does not possess those means of expression, since there has been, until now, no demand for tasks of that sort; only now do they begin to be defined.

*Eisenstein with Le Corbusier and Andrei Burov,
Moscow, 1928*

