

Title: Revolutionary and Reactionary Reality: The Evolution of Soviet and Post-Soviet Documentary Cinema

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Cinema, including documentary, has served as an indicator of political and cultural climate and has changed significantly over time. Stalin-era newsreels and documentaries, such as Mikhail Kalatozov's *Salt for Svanetia* (*Sol' Svanetii*, 1930) and Dziga Vertov's films, are primarily films where the state, through the director, tells the viewer about the positive influence of Soviet power on non-fictional communities and individuals. After a lull in the middle of the century, documentary cinema experienced a revival during perestroika. Cinematic *publitsistika* explored revolutionary new content, but maintained a largely conservative form that resembled Stalinist documentaries. Juris Podnieks' *Is It Easy To Be Young?* (*Legko li byt' molodym?*, 1986) set the tone for this new era of documentary, which captured the attention of audiences both at home and abroad because of its frank questioning of both the Soviet past and its present.

Post-Soviet documentaries further examine many of the same issues as perestroika-era cinema, but do so in a way that reflects new experimentation in cinematic form and changes in methods of filmmaking. This paper examines the relationship of the contemporary Russian filmmaking movement Kinoteatr.doc to Soviet documentaries and explores which traditions they continued and where they broke away from their predecessors and why. Kinoteatr.doc, which involves filmmakers such as Valeriia Gai-Germanika and Nikolai Khomeriki, experiments with many aspects of so-called "real" cinema, including documentary, realistic feature films, and even animation and films shot on cell phone cameras, featured in "mobile.doc" in 2006. They host film festivals each year to showcase their work, the first of which was held in 2005. The development of affordable, portable, digital video cameras and editing equipment has given this group of young filmmakers freedom to create films in ways that were not possible during the Soviet Union.

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