

Call for Papers

Soviet War Propaganda on the Movie Screen, 1939–46

On March 12-13, 2015 the research program CINESOV, the institute Framespa of the Toulouse-le-Mirail University and the Cinematheque of Toulouse organize a conference on "Soviet War Propaganda on the Movie Screen, 1939–46". It shall take place in the framework of the "Zoom arrière" festival's movie screenings of the Cinematheque (March 6-14, 2015).

The first aim of the conference is to contribute to the renewal of our understanding of the Soviet "propaganda art". The term must be seen as covering a larger field than that of political agitation and relate also to education and to the spreading among the civil population of the knowledge of public hygiene, sanitary prevention or technical progress. On the other hand, the aim is to highlight specificities of the war propaganda which directs the use of all means of communication at a unique target. So doing our exploration of Soviet cinema relies on a great number of studies about the wartime mobilization of the movie industry by the anti-nazi coalition as well as the by the enemies.

On the one hand, the project addresses the whole spectrum of film production and explores on the basis of the target publics and the tasks of mobilization more than the films themselves representing Stalin and grandiose historical epics. Communications are welcome if they simultaneously explore different genres and styles (cartoons, fiction, educational films, documentaries, newsreels) and relate them to each other as far as possible.

On the other hand, it is important to see the cinema in the context of all propaganda media. In the Soviet Union film traditionally occupied a central place in the agitprop. Wartime film production must be compared to the press, to radio programs, to photo reports, to posters, to literature and to the theater.

The conference must rethink the propaganda addressing the nation (including the populations of the territories occupied in 1939-40 and reconquered between 1941 and 1944) as well as foreign audiences. The narrative changes depending on the historical moment and the public. This is why the conference must cover the goals of the mobilization during WWII, the postwar expectations and the changes at the start of the Cold War. It will attempt to define with precision in the propaganda for home and international use the place of a certain number of major themes such as the equality of the Soviet empire's peoples, the role of the USSR in recent European history, discourses about external enemies and so on. Papers based on a comparative approach are welcome and so are papers considering the Soviet case in a broad international context of political communication and propaganda.

The participants are encouraged to question the notion of propaganda as such and raise the often neglected issue of its success and failure. The target audiences, the organization of screenings (availability and quality of rooms and sound, the itinerant movie shows) the number of copies and spectators, the political assessment of the films, the reception by the public and by the critics are fields of investigation which may furnish answers.

Conference participants are invited to propose papers on propaganda films (fiction or non-fiction) on reflections on the genre as such, on the propaganda spread by certain genres of films and thematic series on the Soviet system of mobilization by the cinema as specific

propaganda instrument (budget, format, distribution means) the efficacy of the use of the cinema in this framework (comparison with other media, comparison of the propaganda by the anti-nazi coalition and by the enemies) and on other media the Soviets mobilized during WWII. The participants are asked to rely in the measure of possible on hitherto unknown sources, on a large variety of documents and in particular iconographic and audiovisual material. The number of papers will be limited in order to allow the projection of longer excerpts.

The working languages will be French and English.

The deadline for submissions is November 30, 2015. Please send your proposals to Irina Tcherneva: irina.tcherneva@ehess.fr

The selected participants will be informed in early January 2015.

The organizers are going to pay for the stay and the meals of the participants and if possible the travel expenses. First of all the travel expenses of doctoral students, untenured researchers and Russian colleagues will be provided for.