“Toward a Third Cinema”
Octavio Getino y Fernando Solanas
La Habana: Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de África, Asia y América Latina.

Publicado originalmente en Cuba en la revista Tricontinental (1969) el influyente manifiesto “Hacia un tercer cine” de Octavio Getino y Fernando “Pino” Solanas propone un nuevo lenguaje cinematográfico propiamente tercermundista y autónomo, una nueva manera de hacer cine fuera del aparato imperialista y de sus redes de difusión. En dicho ensayo el grupo de cineastas autodenominado Colectivo Cine Liberación establece los objetivos de una nueva estética de cine latinoamericano. Tal como se expresa en el texto este “tercer cine” debe constituirse desde la etapa inicial de producción como antiimperialista y revolucionario; un nuevo cine que busque incidir directamente en los fundamentos materiales del proceso histórico bajo una militancia izquierdista activa y latinoamericana. Pero más allá de sus postulados ideológicos este texto revela la urgencia impostergable de la tarea política del intelectual dentro de la turbulenta crisis social y política en la que fue concebido y apunta hacia la compleja situación latinoamericana frente al imperialismo, por un lado doblegándose ante la fortaleza incontestible del poderío económico y, por otro, renegándose combativamente mediante la revuelta revolucionaria.
How beautiful to fight for liberty!
There is a message of justice in each bullet I shoot.
Old dreams that take wing like birds.
"sings Jorge Rebelo of Mozambique."

Isn't it true that the new culture born in the heat of battle will be a process of confirmation of the nations of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, and Cape Verde?

Certainly, since cultural community — together with language, territory, and economic life — is the fourth aspect of nationhood.

"This schema defined by Stalin continues to guide our investigations and today makes us view the national community as a relative linguistic, politico-economic, and cultural unit. We know the process by which Portuguese colonization prevented our different countries from attaining a national existence. The most common result of colonization is the break in the historical continuity of the old bonds between men, from both a family and an ethnic viewpoint."

The colonial status which unites men in a market economy at the lowest level, which depersonalizes them culturally, negates nationhood.

Now, then, armed struggle allows these communities to reenter history. When this struggle unites all ethnic groups under the banner of nationalism, it becomes a factor which accelerates the process of nationhood. Armed struggle, in order to use a concept developed by Frantz Fanon, is the cultural fact par excellence.

Returning to the role of the intellectual, it remains to say that the intellectuals in our countries have been the driving force behind the awakening of political consciousness and continue to be one of the components of the revolutionary leadership of our liberation struggles. The nature of Portuguese colonization throughout the centuries has been no stranger to the type of compromise made by the assimilated. In effect, it is the assimilated who kill the colonial culture in order to live within the values of the "indigenous" civilization.

With some differences in detail, this process of integration of the intellectuals with the revolution followed an identical pattern in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, and the archipelagos of Saint Thomas and Cape Verde. We have, therefore, one common destiny: to forge rational arms for the awakening of the people's consciousness and to break the chains of cultural duality by participating in revolution.

In an alienated world, culture — obviously — is a deformed and deforming product. To overcome this it is necessary to have a culture of and for the revolution, a subversive culture capable of contributing to the downfall of capitalist society.

"This is the proposition of Fernando Solanas (33-year-old Argentine) and Octavio Getino (34-year-old Spaniard) in this article written especially for Tricontinental. Solanas began his cinematic activity with the short-length film Seguir andando (Keep Walking), Getino, who has lived in Argentina since he was 16 years old, won the 1964 Short Story Award of Casa de las Americas 'with Chulleca; in 1965 he made the film-short Trasmallos. Both recently produced La hora de los hornos (The Time of the Furnaces), a vigorous film denunciation of the injustices to which the Latin-American peoples are subjected."
just a short time ago it would have seemed like a Quixotic adventure in the colonialized, neo-colonialized, or even the imperialist nations themselves to make any attempt to create films of decolonization that turned their back on or actively opposed the System. Until recently, film had been synonymous with show or amusement: in a word, it was one more consumer good. At best, films succeeded in bearing witness to the decay of bourgeois values and testifying to social injustice. As a rule, films only dealt with effect, never with cause; it was cinema of mystification or anti-historicism. It was surplus value cinema. Caught up in these conditions, films, the most valuable tool of the United States, had been synonymous with the anti-imperialist struggle for the world film market, the lords of the world film market, the great majority of whom were from the United States.

Was it possible to overcome this situation? How could the problem of turning out liberation films be approached when costs came to several thousand dollars and the distribution and exhibition channels were in the hands of the enemy? How could the continuity of work be guaranteed? How could the public be reached? How could System-imposed repression and censorship be vanquished? These questions, which could be multiplied in all directions, led and still lead many people to skepticism or rationalization: "revolutionary films cannot be made before the revolution"; "revolutionary films have been possible only in the liberated countries"; "without the support of revolutionary political power, revolutionary films are impossible." The mistake was due to taking the same approach to reality and films as did the bourgeoisie. The models of production, distribution, and exhibition continued to be those of Hollywood precisely because, in ideology and politics, films had not yet become the vehicle for a clearly drawn differentiation between bourgeois ideology and politics. A reformist policy, as manifested in dialogue with the adversary, in existence, and in the relegation of national contradictions to those between two supposedly unique blocs — the USSR and the USA — was and is unable to produce anything but a cinema within the System itself. At best, it can be the "progressive" wing of Establishment cinema. When all is said and done, such cinema was doomed to await until the world conflict was resolved peacefully in favor of socialism in order to change qualitatively. The most daring attempts of those who strove to conquer the fortress of official cinema ended, as Jean-Luc Godard eloquently put it, with the film-makers themselves trapped inside the fortress.

But the questions that were recently raised appeared promising; they arose from a new historical situation to which the film-maker, as is often the case with the educated strata of our countries, was rather a late-comer: ten years of the Cuban Revolution, the Vietnamese struggle, and the development of a worldwide liberation movement whose moving force is to be found in the Third World countries. The existence of masses on the worldwide revolutionary plane was the substantial fact without which those questions could not have been posed. A new historical situation and a new man born in the process of the anti-imperialist struggle demanded a new, revolutionary attitude from the film-makers of the world. The question of whether or not militant cinema was possible before the revolution began to be replaced, at least within small groups, by the question of whether or not such a cinema was necessary to contribute to the possibility of revolution. An affirmative answer was the starting point for the first attempts to channel the process of seeking possibilities in numerous countries. Examples are New, a US new-left film group, the cinegiornali of the Italian student movement, the films made by the Etats Generaux du Cinema Francais, and those of the British and Japanese student movements, all a continuation and deepening of the work of a Joris Ivens or a Chris Marker. Let it suffice to observe the films of a Santiago Alvarez in Cuba, or the cinema being developed by different film-makers in "the homeland of all" as Bolivar would say, as they seek a revolutionary Latin-American cinema.

A profound debate on the role of intellectuals and artists before liberation today is emerging the perspectives of intellectual work all over the world. However, this debate oscillates between two poles: one which proposes to relegate all intellectual work capacity to a specifically political or political-military function, denying perspectives to all artistic activity with the idea that such activity must ineluctably be absorbed by the System, and the other which maintains an individuality of the intellectual: on the one hand, the "work of art," "the privilege of beauty," an art and a beauty which are not necessarily bound to the needs of the revolutionary political process, and, on the other, a political commitment which generally consists in signing certain anti-imperialist manifestoes. In practice, this point of view means the separation of politics and art. This polarity rests, as we see it, on two omissions: first, the conception of culture, science, art, and cinema as universal and universal terms, and, second, an insufficiently clear idea of the fact that the revolution does not begin with the talking of political power from imperialism and the bourgeoisie, but rather begins at the moment when the masses sense the need for change and their intellectual vanguards begin to study and carry out this change through activities on different fronts.

Culture, art, science, and cinema always respond to conflicting class interests. In the neo-colonial situation two concepts of culture, art, science, and cinema compete: that of the rulers and that of the nation. And this situation will continue, as long as the national concept is not identified with that of the rulers, as long as the status of colony or semi-colony continues in force. Moreover, the duality will be overcome and will reach a single and universal category only when the best values of man emerge from prescriptions to achieve hegemony, when the liberation of man is universal. In the meantime, there exist our culture and our cinema, our culture and their cinema. Because our culture is an impulse towards emancipation,
it will remain in existence until emancipation is a reality; a culture of subversion which will carry with it an art, a science, and a cinema of subversion.

The lack of awareness in regard to these dualities generally leads the intellectual to deal with artistic and scientific expressions as they were universally conceived by the classes that rule the world, at best introducing some correction into these expressions. We have not gone deeply enough into developing a revolutionary theater, architecture, medicine, psychology, and cinema; into developing a culture by and for us. The intellectual takes each of these forms of expression as a unit to be corrected from within the expression itself, and not from without, with its own new methods and models.

An astronaut or a Ranger mobilizes all the scientific resources of imperialism. Psychologists, doctors, politicians, sociologists, mathematicians, and even artists are thrown into the study of everything that serves, from the vantage point of different specialties, the preparation of an orbital flight or the massacre of Vietnamese; in the long run, all of these specialties are equally employed to satisfy the needs of imperialism. In Buenos Aires the army eradicates villas, mina y (urban slum), and in their place puts up "strategic hamlets" with urbanized setups aimed at facilitating military intervention when the time comes. The revolutionary organizations lack specialized fronts in the Establishment's medicine, engineering, psychology, and art — not to mention the development of our own revolutionary engineering, psychology, art, and cinema. In order to be effective, all these fields must recognize the priorities of each stage; those required by the struggle for power or those demanded by the already victorious revolution.

Examples: creating a political sensitivity as awareness of the need to undertake a political-military struggle in order to take power; intensifying all the modern resources of medical science to prepare people with optimum levels of health and physical efficiency, ready for combat in rural or urban zones; coordinating energies to achieve a production of ten million tons of sugar, as is happening in Cuba; or elaborating an architecture, a city planning, that will be able to withstand the massive air raids that imperialism can launch at any time. The specific strengthening of each specialty and field subordinate to collective priorities can fill the empty spaces caused by the struggle for liberation and can delineate with greatest efficacy the role of the intellectual in our time. It is evident that revolutionary mass-level culture and awareness can only be achieved after the taking of political power, but it is no less true that the use of scientific and artistic means, together with political-military means, prepares the terrain for the revolution to become reality and facilitates the solution of the problems that will arise with the taking of power.

The intellectual must find through his action the field in which he can rationally perform the most efficient work. Once the front has been determined, his next task is to find out within that front exactly what is the enemy's stronghold and where and how he must deploy his forces. It is in this harsh and dramatic daily search that a culture of the revolution will be able to emerge, the basis which will nurture, beginning right now, the new man exemplified by Che — not man in the abstract, not the "liberation of man," but another man, capable of arising from the ashes of the old, alienated...
ed man that we are and which the new man will destroy — by starting to stoke the fire today.

The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. Third cinema is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognizes in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point — its word, the decolonization of culture.

The culture, including the cinema, of a neocolonialized country is just the expression of an overall dependence that generates models and born from the needs of imperialist expansion.

In order to impose itself, neocolonialism needs to convince the people of a dependent equality of their own inferiority. Sooner or later, the inferior man recognizes Man with a capital M; this recognition means the destruction of his defenses. If you want to be a man, says the oppressor, you have to be like me, speak my language, dress your own being, yourself into me. As early as the 17th century the Jesuit missionaries proclaimed the aptitude of the [South American] native for copying European words of art. Copyists, translators, at best a spectator, the neocolonialized intellectual always be encouraged to refuse to assume his creative possibilities. Inhibitions, uproar, neocolonialism needs, cultural colonia-

not due to the use of two languages but because of the construction of two cultural patterns of thinking. One is national, that of the people, and the other is estranging, that of the classes subordinated to outside forces. The admiration that the upper classes express for the US or Europe is the highest expression of their subjection. With the coloniza-

of national independence, colonial situations all join forces today in a serious attempt to complement the culture of imperialism indirectly introduced among the masses of knowledge which cannot be super-

Just as they are not masters of the land upon which they walk, the neocolonialized people are not masters of the ideas that envelop them. A knowledge of national reality presupposes going into the web of lies and confusion that arise from dependence. The intellectual is obliged to refrain from spontaneous thought; he does think, he generally rules the risk of doing as in French or English — never in the language of a culture of his own, which, like the process of national and social liberation, is static, hazy and incoherent. Every piece of data, every concept that floats around us, is part of a fragmentary images that it is difficult to take apart.

The native bourgeoisie of the port cities such as Buenos Aires and their respective intellectual elites, constructed, from the very origins of our history, the transmission belt of neocolonial penetration. Behind such watchwords as "Civilization or barbarism!" manufactured in Argentina by Europeanizing liberalism, was the attempt to impose a civilization fully in keeping with the needs of imperialist expansion and the desire to destroy the resistance of the national masses, which variously succeeded as the "rabble," a "bunch of blacks," and "zoological ferrets" in our country and "the unwashed hordes" in Bolivia. In this way the idealists of the semicountries, past masters in "the play of big words, with an implacable, detailed, and rustic universalism," served as spokesmen of those followers of Darsa who intelligently proclaimed: "I prefer the rights of the English to the rights of man."

The middle sectors were and are the best recipients of cultural neocolonialism. Their ambivalent class condition, their buffer position between social polarities, and their broader possibilities of access to civilization offer imperialism a base of social support which has attained considerable importance in some Latin-American countries.

If, in the open colonial situation, cultural penetration is the complement of a foreign army of occupation, during certain stages that penetration takes on greater importance in the neocolonial countries.

It serves to institutionalize and give a normal appearance to dependence. The main objectives of this cultural deformation is to keep the people from realizing their neocolonialized position and aspiring to change it. In this way pedagogical colonization is an effective substitute for the colonial policy.

Ideas such as "Beauty in itself is revolutionary" and "All new cinema is revolutionary" are ideologic aspirations that do not touch the neocolonial condition, since they continue to conceive of cinema, art, and beauty as universal abstractions and not as an integral part of the national processes of decolonization.

and thousands of records, films, etc., join their accentuating role of the colonization of taste and consciousness to the process of neocolonial education which begins in primary school and is completed in the university. "Mass communications are more effective for neocolonialism than napalm. What is real, true, and rational is to be found on the margin of the law, just as are the people. Violence, crime, and destruction come to be Peace, Order, and Normalcy." Truth, then, amounts to subversion. Any form of expression or communication that tries to show national reality is subversion.

Cultural penetration, pedagogical colonization, and mass communications all join forces today in a desperate attempt to absorb, neutralize, or eliminate any expression that responds to an attempt at decolonization. Neocolonialism makes a serious attempt to castrate, to digest, the cultural forms that arise beyond the bounds of its own aims. Attempts are made to remove from them precisely what makes them effective and dangerous, their politicization. Or, to put it another way, to separate the cultural manifestation from the fight for national independence.

"Beauty in itself is revolutionary" and "All new cinema is revolutionary" are ideological aspirations that do not touch the neocolonial condition, since they continue to conceive of cinema, art, and beauty as universal abstractions and not as an integral part of the national processes of decolonization.
Any dispute, no matter how virulent, which does not serve to mobilize, agitate, and politicize sectors of the people to arm them rationally and perceptibly, in one way or another, for the struggle — is received with indifference or even with pleasure. Virulence, nonconformity, plain rebellion, and discontent are just as many more products on the capitalist market; they are consumer goods. This is especially true in a situation where the bourgeoisie is in need of a daily dose of shock and exciting elements of controlled violence — that is, violence which absorption by the System turns into pure servility. Examples are the works of a social-tinged painting and sculpture which are greedily sought after by the new bourgeoisie to decorate their apartments and mansions; plays full of anger and avant-garde which are ostentatiously applauded by the ruling classes; the literature of progressive writers concerned with semantics and man on the margin of time and space, which gives an air of democratic broad-mindedness to the System's publishing houses and magazines; and the cinema of "challenges," or "agreements," promoted by the distribution monopolies and launched, by the big commercial outlets.

In reality the area of "permitted protest" of the System is much greater than the System is willing to admit. This gives the artists the illusion that they are setting "against the System" by going beyond certain narrow limits; they do not realize that even anti-Sytem art can be absorbed and utilized by the System, as both a brake and a necessary self-correction.

In some cases, an awareness of how to utilize what is sold for our true liberation — in a word, lacking politicization — all of these "progressive" alternatives come to form the leftist wing of the System, the improvement of its cultural products. They will be doomed to carry out the best work on the left that the right is able to accept today and will thus only serve the survival of the latter. "Vivisection, dramatic actions, and images to the places where they can carry out a revolutionary role, where they will be useful, where they will become weapons in the struggle." Insert the work as an original fact in the process of liberation, place it first at the service of life itself, ahead of art; dissolve aesthetics in the life of society; only in this way, as Fanon said, can dehumanization become possible and culture, cinema, and beauty at least, what is of greatest importance to us — become our culture, our films, and our sense of beauty.

The historical perspectives of Latin America and of the majority of the countries under imperialist domination are headed not towards a lessening of repression but towards its intensification. We are living not for bourgeois-democratic regimes but for dictatorial forms of government. The struggles for democratid freedoms, instead of seizing concessions from the System, must turn it to cut down on them, given its narrow margin for maneuvering.

The bourgeois-democratic facade caved in some time ago. The cycle opened during the last century in Latin America with the first attempts at self-affirmation of a national bourgeoisie differentiated from the metropolis (examples are Rosas' federalism in Argentina, the Lopez and Francia regimes in Paraguay, and those of Bengoio and Balmaceda in Chile) with a tradition that has continued well into our century: national-bourgeois, national-popular, and democratic-bourgeois attempts were made by Carleses, Yrigoyen, Haya de la Torre, Vargas, Azurue, Chica, Pardos, and Arbenz. But as far as revolutionary prospects are concerned, the cycle has definitely been completed. The lines allowing for the deepening of the historical attempt of each of those experiences today pass through the sectors that understand the continent's situation as one of war and that are preparing, under the force of circumstances, to make that region the Viet-Nam of the coming decade. A war in which national liberation can only succeed when it is simultaneously postulated as social liberation — socialism as the only valid perspective of any national liberation process.

At this time in America there is room for neither passivity nor indissoluble. The intellectual's commitment is measured in terms of risks as well as words and ideas; what he does to further the cause thus risks losing his job or even his life, the student who jeopardizes his career, the militant who keeps silent under torture: each by his or her action commits us to something much more important than a vague gesture of solidarity in a situation in which the "state of law" is replaced by the "state of facts," the intellectual, who is one more worker, functioning on a cultural front, must become increasingly radicalized to avoid denial of self and to carry on what is expected of him in his times. The implication of all reformist concepts has already been exposed sufficiently, not only in politics but also in culture and films — and especially in the latter, whose history is that of imperialist domination — mainly Yankee.

Culture and cinema are optional not because they are located within certain geographical limits, but when they respond to the particular needs of development and liberation of each people. The cinema, which is today dominant in our countries, set up to accept and justify, depend on the origin of all underdevelopment, can be nothing but a dependent and underdeveloped cinema.

While, during the early history (or the prehistory) of the cinema, it was possible to speak of a German, an Italian, or a Swedish cinema clearly differentiated and corresponding to specific national characteristics, today such differences have disappeared. The borders were wiped out along with the expansion of US imperialism and the film model that it imposed: Hollywood movies. In our times it is hard to find a film within the field of commercial cinema, including what is known as "author's cinema," in both the capitalist and socialist countries, that manages to avoid the models of Hollywood pictures. The latter have such a fast hold on monumental works such as the USSR's Bondarchuk's War and Peace are also monumental examples of the subjection to all the propositions imposed by the US movie industry (structure, language, etc.) and, consequently, to its concepts.

The placing of the cinema within US models, even in the formal aspect, in language, leads to the adoption of the ideological form that...
The mechanistic takeover of a cinema conceived as a show to be exhibited in large theaters with a standard duration, hierarchic structures that are born and die on the screen, satisfies, to be sure, the commercial interests of the production groups, but it also leads to the absorption of forms of the bourgeois art. The film-maker is accepted only as a passive and consuming object rather than having his ability to make history recognized. He is only permitted to read history, contemplate, place it, listen to it, and undergo it. This cinema as a spectacle aimed at a digesting object is the highest point that can be reached by bourgeois film-making. The world, existence, and the historic process are enclosed within the frame of a painting, the same stage of a theater, and the movie screen; man is viewed as a consumer of ideology, and not as the creator of ideology. This notion is the starting point for the wonderful interplay of bourgeois philosophy and the obtaining of surplus value. The result is a cinema studied by motivational analysts, sociologists, and psychologists, by the endless researchers of the dreams and frustrations of the masses, all aimed at setting the movie-life, reality as it is conceived by the ruling classes.

The first alternative to this type of cinema which we could call the first cinema, arose with the so-called "author's cinema," "expression cinema," "mouvante vague," "cinema rovo," or, conventionally, the second cinema. This alternative signifies a step forward inasmuch as it demanded that the film maker be free to express himself in a non-standard language and inasmuch as it was an attempt at cultural decolonization. But such attempts have already reached, or are about to reach, the outer limits of what the system permits. The second cinema film-maker has remained "trapped inside the fortress" as Godard put it, or is on his way to becoming trapped. The search for a market of 250,000 movie-goers in Argentina, a figure that is supposed to cover the costs of an independent local production, the politicalization of developing a mechanism of industrial production parallel to that of the System but which would be distributed by the System according to its own norms, the struggle to better the laws protecting the cinema and replacing "bad" with "good," etc., is a search lacking in viable prospects, unless you consider viable the prospect of becoming institutionalized as "the enlightened minority of the city," that is, of neo-colonialized society. This importance is to be found in the specific meaning of films as a form of communication and because of their particular characteristics that allow them to draw audiences of different origins, their role as a means of communication and because of their particular characteristics that allow them to draw audiences of different origins.

Neither of these requirements fits within the alternative that are given by the second cinema, but they can be found in the revolutionary opening towards a cinema outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation: the third cinema.

One of the most effective jobs done by neocolonialism is its cutting off of intellectual sectors, especially artists, from national reality by lining them up behind universal art models. It has been very common for intellectuals and artists to be found at the tail end of popular struggle, when they have not actually taken up positions against it. The social layers which have made the greatest contribution to the building of a national culture (understood as an impulsion towards decolonization) have not been precisely the enlightened elites but rather the most exploited and unexplored sectors. Popular organizations have very rightly distrusted the "intellectual" and the "artist." When they have not been openly used by the bourgeoisie or imperialism, they have certainly been their indirect tools; most of them did not go beyond repeating a policy in favor of "peace and democracy" to the horror of anything that had a national ring to it, as the popular movement and the organizations and the vanguards of the layers of the masses. But the new films and art. And the revolutionary organizations in turn, are discovering the vacuums that the struggle for power creates in the cultural sphere. The problems of film-making, the ideological limitations of a film-maker in a neocolonialized country, etc. have thus far constituted objective factors in the lack of attention paid to the cinema by the people's organizations. Newspapers and other printed matter, posters and wall propaganda, speeches and other verbal forms of information, enlightenment, and politicization are still the main means of communication between the organizations and the vanguards of the masses of the world, existence, and the historic process.
ment of a political speech. Films offer an effective pretext for gathering an audience, in addition to the ideological message they contain. The capacity for synthesis and the penetration of the film image, the possibilities offered by the living document and naked reality, and the power of enlightenment of audiovisual means make the film far more effective than any other tool of communication. It is hardly necessary to point out that those films which achieve an intelligent use of the possibilities of the image, adequate dosage of concepts, language, and structure that flow naturally from each theme, and counterpoints of audiovisual narration achieve effective results in the politicization and mobilization of cadres and even in work with the masses, where this is possible.

The students who raised barricades on the Avenida 18 de Julio in Montevideo after the showing of Me gustan los estudiantes (I Like Students) (Mario Handler), those who demonstrated and sang the "Internationale" in Merida and Campeche, those made by Santiago Alvarez and the Cuban documentary film La hora de los hornos (The Time of Furnaces), and many others have opened up unheard-of prospects in the conception of film making and the goal of instruction in its handling. The advance of the underground or semipublic showings of third cinema films is the beginning of a twisting and difficult road being traveled in the consumer societies by the mass organizations (Cine-national in Italy, Zenkaturen documentaries in Japan, etc.). For the first time in Latin America, organizations are ready and willing to employ films for political-cultural ends: the Chilean Partido Socialista provides its cadres with revolutionary film material, while Argentine revolutionary Peronist and non-Peronist groups are taking an interest in doing likewise. Moreover, OSPAAAL has opened the door by participating in the production and distribution of films that contribute to the anti-imperialist struggle. The revolutionary organizations are discovering the need for cadres who, among other things, know how to handle a film camera, tape recorders, and projectors in the most effective way possible. The struggle to seize power from the enemy is the meeting ground of the political and artistic vanguards engaged in a common task which is enriching to both.

Some of the circumstances that delayed the use of films as a revolutionary tool until a short time ago were lack of equipment, technical difficulties, the compulsory specialization of each phase of work, and high costs. The advances that have taken place within each specialization; the simplification of film making and its handling; the spread of know-how by means of specialized magazines with large circulations and even through nonprofessional media, have helped to demystify film making and divert it of that almost magic aura that made it seem that films were only within the reach of "artists," "geniuses," and "the privileged." Film making is increasingly within the reach of the African savages, killer animals, wallow in abject anarchy once they escape from white protection. Tarzan died, and in his place were born Lumumba and Lobengula, Nikos, and the Madzimbamutos, and the ruling class has realized that this is something that neocolonialism cannot forgive. Fantasy has been replaced by phantoms, and man is turned into an extra who dies so Jacopetti can comfortably film his execution. I make the revolution; therefore, I exist. This is the starting point for the disappearance of fantasy and phantoms to make way for living human beings. The cinema of the revolution is at the same time one of destruction and construction: destruction of the image that neocolonialism has created of itself and us, and construction of a throbbing, living reality which recaptures truth in any of its expressions.

The restitution of things to their real and meaningful place is an eminently subversive fact both in the neocolonial situation and in the consumer societies. In the former, the seeming ambiguity or pseudo-objectivity in newspapers, literature, etc. and the relative freedom of the people's organizations to provide their own information cease to exist, giving way to overt restriction, when it is a question of television and radio, the two most important systems of communications media. Last year's May events in France are quite explicit on this point.

In a world where the unreal rules, artistic expression is shoved along the channels of fantasy, fiction, language in code, sign language, and messages whispered between the lines. Art is out from the concrete facts — which, from the neo-colonialist standpoint, are accusatory testimonies to turn back on itself, shifting about in a world of abstractions and phantoms, where it becomes "timeless" and historyless. Viet-Nam can be mentioned, but only far from Viet-Nam, Latin America can be mentioned, but only far enough away from the continent to be ineffective, in places where it is depoliticized and where it does not lead to action. The cinema known as documentary, with all the vastness that the
concept has today, from educational films to the reconstruction of a fact or historical event, is perhaps the main basis of revolutionary film making. Every image that documents, bears witness to, refutes or deepens the truth of a situation is something more than a film image or purely artistic fact; it becomes something which the System finds indigestible.

Testimony about a national reality is also an inestimable means of dialogue and knowledge on the world plane. No internationalist form of struggle can be carried out successfully if there is not a mutual exchange of experiences among the people, if the people do not succeed in breaking out of the Balcization on the international, continental, and national planes which imperialism is striving to maintain. There is no knowledge of a reality as long as that reality is not acted upon, as long as its transformation is not begun on all fronts of struggle. The well-known quote from Marx deserves constant repetition: it is not sufficient to interpret the world; it is now a question of transforming it.

Pamphlet films, didactic films, report films, essay films, witness-bearing films — any militant form of expression is valid, and it would be absurd to lay down a set of aesthetic work norms. Be receptive to all that the people have to offer, and offer them the best; or, as Che put it, respect the people by giving them quality. This is a good thing to keep in mind in view of those tendencies which are always latent in the revolutionary artist to lower the level of investigation and the language of a theme, in a kind of neopopulism, down to levels which, while they may perhaps be those upon which the masses move, do not help them to get rid of the stumbling blocks left by imperialism. The effectiveness of the best films of militant cinema show that social layers considered backward are able to capture the exact meaning of an association, and to go along paths that he himself opens up with machete blows. The possibility of discovering and inventing new film-maker to take chances on the unknown, to leap into space at times, exposing himself to failure and the possibility of discovery and invention is a kind of depth which can give a film beauty and effectiveness. The reality of the revolutionary processes all over the world, in spite of their confused and negative aspects, possesses a dominant line, a synthesis which is so rich and stimulating that it does not need to be schematized with partial or sectarian views.

And such unsuccessful attempts lead to feelings of frustration and inferiority. Both these feelings arise in the first place from the fear of taking risks along completely new roads which are almost a total denial of "their cinema." A fear of recognizing the particularities and limitations of a dependency situation in order to discover the possibilities inherent in that situation by finding limitations of overcoming it which would be necessary to be original.

The existence of a revolutionary cinema is inconceivable without the constant and methodical exercise of search, practice, and experimentation. It even means committing the new film-maker to take chances on the unknown, to leap into space at times, exposing himself to failure and the possibility of discovering and inventing new forms and structures that serve a militant form of expression. The possibility of discovering and inventing new forms makes the cinema show that social layers considered backward are able to capture the exact meaning of an association, and any linguistic experimentation placed within the context of a given idea. Furthermore, revolutionary cinema is not fundamentally one which illustrates, documents, or passively establishes a synthesis which is so rich and stimulating that it does not need to be schematized with partial or sectarian views.

The differences that exist between one and another liberation process make it impossible to lay down supposedly universal norms. A cinema which in the consumer society does not attain the level of consciousness of the reality in which it moves can play a stimulating role in an underdeveloped country, just as a revolutionary cinema in the neocolonial situation will not necessarily be revolutionary if it is mechanically taken to the metropolis country.

The attempt in the sphere of film making to match the pictures of the ruling countries generally ends in failure, given the existence of two disparate historical realities. And such unsuccessful attempts lead to feelings of frustration and inferiority. Both these feelings arise in the first place from the fear of taking risks along completely new roads which are almost a total denial of "their cinema." A fear of recognizing the particularities and limitations of a dependency situation in order to discover the possibilities inherent in that situation by finding limitations of overcoming it which would be necessary to be original.

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Teaching the handling of guns can be revolutionary where there are potentially or explicitly viable layers ready to throw themselves into the struggle to take power, but ceases to be revolutionary where the masses still lack sufficient awareness of their situation or where they already have learned to handle guns. Thus, a cinema which insists upon the denunciation of the effects of neocolonial policy is caught up in a reformist game if the consciousness of the masses has already assimilated such knowledge; then the revolutionary task is to examine the causes, to investigate the ways of organizing and arming for the change. That is, imperialism can be schematized with partial or sectorial views.

Our time is one of hypothesis rath-
er than of thesis, a time of works and maintains its continuity. Experience shows that this is not easy to maintain the cohesion of a group when it is bombarded by the System and its chain of accomplices and its inability to remain silent, on its responsibilities, as the sum and synthesis of abilities, inasmuch as it operates harmonically with leadership that centralizes planning work and maintains its continuity. Experience shows that this is not easy to maintain the cohesion of a group when it is bombarded by the System and its chain of accomplices frequently disguised as "progresses," when there are no immediate and spectacular outer incentives and the members must undergo the discomforts and tensions of work that is done underground and distributed clandestinely. Many abandon their responsibilities because they underestimate them or because they measure them with values appropriate to System cinema and not underground cinema. The birth of internal conflicts is a reality present in any group, whether or not it possesses ideological maturity. The lack of awareness of such an inner conflict on the psychological or personality plane, etc., the lack of maturity in dealing with problems of relationships, at times leads to ill feeling and rivalries that in turn cause real clashes going beyond ideological or objective differences. All of this means that a basic condition is an awareness of the problems of interpersonal relationships, leadership and areas of competence. What is needed is to speak clearly, mark off work areas, assign responsibilities and take on the job as a rigorous mission.

Guerrilla film making proletarianizes the film worker and breaks down the intellectual aristocracy that the bourgeoisie grants to its guerrillas. It is a fundamental principle that a film worker is a part of the people, and it cannot grow strong without military structures and command concepts. The group exists as a network of complementary responsibilities, as the sum and synthesis of abilities, inasmuch as it operates harmonically with a leadership and areas of competence.

Implementation

In this long war, with the camera as our rifle, we do in fact move into a guerrilla activity. This is why the work of a film-guerrilla group is governed by strict disciplinary norms as to both work methods and life, that is, by the inexhaustible expropriator of image-weapons; the projector, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second. Each member of the group should be familiar, at least in a general way, with the equipment being used; he must be prepared to replace another in any of the phases of production. The myth of irreplaceable technicians must be exploded.

The whole group must be armed, to the extent of their ability to carry on the work and maintain its continuity. Each member of the group must have an ability to take care of details; discipline; speed; and, above all, the willingness to overcome the weaknesses of comfort, old habits, and the whole climate of pseudonormality. A group of film workers will be the sole producers of their films. They must collaborate of militants and cadres from the people.

The revolutionary film-maker acts with a radically new vision of the role of the producer, teamwork, tools, details, etc. Above all, he supplies himself at all levels in order to produce his films, he equips himself at all levels, he learns how to handle the manifold techniques of his craft. His most valuable possessions are the tools of his trade, which form part and parcel of his need to communicate. The camera is an inexhaustible expropriator of image-weapons; the projector, a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second. Each member of the group should be familiar, at least in a general way, with the equipment being used; he must be prepared to replace another in any of the phases of production. The myth of irreplaceable technicians must be exploded.

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Guerrilla cinema still doesn't have enough experience to set down standards in this area; what experience there is has shown, above all, the ability to make use of the concrete situation of each country. But, regardless of what these situations may be, the preparation of a film cannot be undertaken without a parallel study of its future audience and, consequently, a plan to recover the financial investment. Here, once again, the need arises of closer ties between political and artistic vanguards, since this also serves for the joint study of forms of production, exhibition, and continued resistance.

A guerrilla film can be aimed only at the distribution mechanisms provided by the revolutionary organizations, including those invented or discovered by the filmmaker himself. Production, distribution, and economic possibilities for survival must form part of a single strategy. The solution of the problems faced in each of these areas will encourage other people to join in the work of guerrilla filmmaking, which will enlarge its ranks and thus make it less vulnerable.

The distribution of guerrilla films in Latin America is still in swaddling clothes, while System representatives are already a legalized fact. Suffice it to note in Argentina the raids that have occurred during some showings and the recent film suppressing law of a nearly basest character, in Brazil the ever-increasing restrictions placed upon the most militant comedies of cinema novo, and in Venezuela the banning and house raids by the police against collaborators. In de los hornos almost all over the continent, censorship prevents any possibility of public distribution.

Without revolutionary films and a public that asks for them, any attempt to open up new ways of distribution would be doomed to failure. But both of these already exist in Latin America. The appearance of the films opened up a road which in some countries, such as Argentina, occurs through showings in apartments and houses to audiences of never more than 30 people; in other countries, such as Chile, films are shown in parishes, universities, or cultural centers (of which there are fewer every day); and, in the case of Uruguay, showings were given in Montevideo's biggest movie theater to an audience of 2500 people, who filled the theater and made every showing an impassioned anti-imperialist event. But the prospects on the continental front indicate that the possibility for the continuity of a revolutionary cinema rests upon the strengthening of rigorously underground structures.

Practice implies mistakes and failures. Some comrades will let themselves be carried away by the success and impunity with which they present the first showings and will tend to relax security measures, while others will go in the opposite direction of excessive precautions or fearfulness, to such an extent that distribution remains circumscribed, limited to a few groups of friends. Only concrete experience in each country will demonstrate which are the best methods there, which do not always lend themselves to a revolutionary cinema to recover the production and distribution costs are to some extent similar to those obtained for conventional cinema: every spectator should pay the same amount as he pays to see System cinema. Financing, subsidizing, equipping, and supporting revolutionary cinema is a political responsibility for revolutionary organizations and militants. A film can be made, but if its distribution does not allow for the recovery of the costs, it will be difficult or impossible to make a second film.

The 16 mm film circuits in Europe (20 000 exhibition centers in Sweden, 30 000 in France, etc.) are not the best example for the neo-colonialized countries, but they are nevertheless a complement to be kept in mind for fund raising, especially in a situation in which such circuits can play an important role in publicizing the struggles in the Third World, increasingly related as they are to those unfolding in the metropolises. A film on the Venezuelan guerrillas will say more to a European public than 20 explanatory pamphlets, and the same is true for us with a film on the May events in France or the Berkeley, USA, student struggle.

A Guerrilla Films International? And why not? Isn't it true that a kind of new International is arising through the Third World struggles; through OSPAAAL and the revolutionary vanguards of the consumer societies?

A guerrilla cinema, at this stage still within the reach of limited layers of the population, is, nevertheless, the only cinema of the masses possible today, since it is the only one involved with the interests, aspirations, and prospects of the vast majority of the people. Every important film produced by a revolutionary cinema will be explicit or not, a national event of the masses.

This cinema of the masses, which is prevented from reaching beyond the sectors representing the masses, provokes with each showing, as in a revolutionary military invasion, a liberated space, a decolonized territory. The showing can be turned into a kind of political event, which, according to Fanon, could be "a liturgical act, a privileged occasion for human beings to bear and be heard." Militant cinema must be able to extract the infinity of new possibilities that open up for it from...
the conditions of proscription imposed by the System. The attempt to overcome neocolonial oppression calls for the invention of forms of communication; it opens up the possibility.

Before and during the making of La hora de los hornos, we tried out various methods for the distribution of revolutionary cinema—the little that we had made up to then. Each showing for militants, middle-level cadres, activists, workers, and university students became—without our having set ourselves this aim beforehand—a kind of enlarged cell meeting of which the films were a part but not the most important factor. We thus discovered a new facet of cinema: the participation of people who, until then, were considered spectators. At times, security reasons obliged us to try to dissolve the group of participants as soon as the showing was over, and we realized that the distribution of that kind of film had little meaning if it was not complemented by the participation of the comrades, if a debate was not opened on the themes suggested by the film. We also discovered that every cadre who attended such showings did so with full awareness that he was infringing the System’s laws and exposing his personal security to eventual repression. This person was no longer a spectator; on the contrary, from the moment he decided to attend the showing, from the moment he lined himself up on this side by taking risks and contributing his living experience to the meeting, he became an actor, a more important protagonist than those who appeared in the films. Such a person had committed himself like himself, while he, in turn, became committed to them. The spectator made way for the actor, who sought himself in others.

Outside this space which the films momentarily helped to liberate, there was nothing but solitude, noncommunication, distrust, and fear; within the freed space the situation turned everyone into accomplices of the act that was unfolding. The debates arose spontaneously. And then comes the third stage, that of knowledge. The active role of knowledge is expressed not only in the active leap from sensory to rational knowledge, but, and what is even more important, in the leap from rational knowledge to revolutionary practice. The practice of the transformation of the world...

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The twelve issues that have been published during this period have included contributions from the most distinguished leaders of the so-called Third World as well as revolutionary intellectuals interested in the struggles of the national liberation movements. The magazine has also published articles containing valuable information and reports on current events on the three continents — events which are dealt with only superficially, if at all, in the general press at the service of imperialist interests.

In the course of the past two years, Tricontinental has been a source of information on the African, Asian, and Latin-American struggles against neocolonialism and imperialism, while serving as a forum for the open debate of ideas, with an emphasis on those concerning our essential problems, especially on the question of revolution.

From the heroic fight of the Vietnamese against US aggression, to the actions of the Palestinian commandos, to guerrilla activity in Africa and Latin America, the magazine has given a panorama of the present situation in the Third World, that vast mosaic of oppressed nations exploited by imperialist hegemony.

Although it is an organ of the Executive Secretariat of OSPAAAL, the magazine has also included articles on especially interesting themes and opinions which, although not always representing...