



# RESEARCHING WOMEN IN SILENT CINEMA

## NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

EDITED BY MONICA DALL'ASTA, VICTORIA DUCKETT, LUCIA TRALLI

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ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

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## Women and Screen Cultures

Series editors: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett

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Women and Screen Cultures is a series of experimental digital books aimed to promote research and knowledge on the contribution of women to the cultural history of screen media. Published by the Department of the Arts at the University of Bologna, it is issued under the conditions of both open publishing and blind peer review. It will host collections, monographs, translations of open source archive materials, illustrated volumes, transcripts of conferences, and more. Proposals are welcomed for both disciplinary and multi-disciplinary contributions in the fields of film history and theory, television and media studies, visual studies, photography and new media.



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# 1

### Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives

Edited by: Monica Dall'Asta, Victoria Duckett, Lucia Tralli

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# Researching Women in Silent Cinema: New Findings and Perspectives

## Peer Review Statement

This publication has been edited through a blind peer review process. Papers from the Sixth Women and the Silent Screen Conference (University of Bologna, 2010), a biennial event sponsored by Women and Film History International, were read by the editors and then submitted to at least one anonymous reviewer. When the opinion of the first reader was entirely negative or asked for substantial revision, the essay was submitted to a second anonymous reviewer. In case of a second negative opinion the essay was rejected. When further changes were deemed necessary for publication, the editors worked extensively with the authors to meet the requests advanced by the reviewers.

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## Dunja Dogo

### The Image of a Revolutionist: Vera Figner in *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*

**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, I will examine an excerpt from the first Soviet film reconstruction of the 1917 February Revolution, Esfir' Shub's *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927). My purpose is to provide a specific example of how, by means of cinema, Bolshevik propaganda related to the subject of women's involvement in the 1917 upheavals in Russia. The analysis of this fragment will serve as an illustration of how the initiative of women's organizations was played down in the early Soviet mass culture, and how their history was left out of the process through which an official, public memory of 1917 Russian Revolution was finally brought into existence.

#### *A Visual History of the 1917 Revolution: Esfir' Shub at Work*

Esfir' Shub's masterpiece, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927), offers an interesting source for a critical apprehension of the obliteration of women's role in the history of pre- and post-revolutionary Russia. A short sequence portraying Vera Figner, an old anarchist and a regicide, in the middle of a feminist rally in February 1917 prompts an interrogation on how early Bolshevik propaganda related to the subject of women's contribution to the events that led to the October Revolution. In what follows I will try to show how Shub's treatment of this fragment can only be understood in the frame of the Bolshevik attempt to mould a biased official memory, where all the different political strands of the revolutionary movement would be aligned under the single flag of the Bolshevik Party.

The project of a film recounting the events of 1917 February Revolution in Russia was assigned to Esfir' Shub in 1925.<sup>1</sup> The idea to use the cinematographic medium to convey the Bolshevik Party's official viewpoint on the year 1917 had been advocated by two well known Marxist scholars of the Russian revolutionary movement: Mikhail Z. Tseitlin, a research consultant at the Museum of the Revolution in Petrograd/Leningrad) and Mikhail N. Pokrovsky, who was then chair of the new Society of Marxist Historians, as well as in charge of several other leading positions in the Soviet cultural administration, including a long term mandate as an assistant chief at Narkompros [all-soviet union commissariat of enlightenment].<sup>2</sup>

When Shub was assigned the making of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*,<sup>3</sup> she was already a

<sup>1</sup> For a complete profile of Esfir' Ilyichna Shub, also known as Esther in Anglo-American literature, see Petrich.

<sup>2</sup> In 1925, the historian Michail N. Pokrovsky (1868-1932) founded the first Marxist upper school for preparing professors to teachon the basis of the Marxist thoughtideology. The historians who graduated at this institute did more than just wrting about the historical eventsdevelopment: they interpreted the pastit according to a paradigm made to legitimize the October revolution. (Enteen; Ferro 163-70; Fitzpatrick 316).

<sup>3</sup> Prepared under the working title "February," the film was released in March 1927 as a 1500 metres feature.



Э. Шуб

Esfir' Shub portrait, *Sovetskiy ekran* 27 (5 July 1927).

professional editor, with a particular expertise in the practice of re-editing and re-titling. As she recalls in her memoirs, Shub had specialized in this particular practice since 1922, during her work at Goskino [central state directory body of the soviet cinematography], while she was still carrying out her training in film editing at the experimental laboratory held by Lev Kuleshov at VGIK (Shub, *Krupnym Planom* [close-up] 61–75; *Zhizn' moia—Kinematograf* [my life—cinema] 66–83; Alekhsandrov 42). Her task was to adapt any kind of films—from archival films of the pre-revolutionary period, to foreign popular titles imported for domestic distribution—to the needs of communist propaganda: she worked especially on foreign serials, to remove their politically more ‘incorrect aspects’ through cutting, reassembling and retitling. The lack of production facilities in the earlier years after World War I and the Russian Civil War, as well as the limited supply of films from abroad, also sometimes required the reissue of old films from the pre-revolutionary period, which in turn required significant adjustments to the new ideological principles. After gaining her reputation in the early 1920s as a master of re-editing techniques and the editor of a dozen of Soviet features, she was soon recognized as one of the most original pioneers of Soviet cinema—that is, not only one of the first Russian women director but also a pioneer in the area of the compilation film genre (Leyda 22–31).

In 1925, Tseitin assigned Shub to study a project that was to become a prime example among the Soviet films of the decade, a work giving voice to the Soviet communist ideology and its view on history. Though she hadn’t joined the Bolshevik Party, Shub was certainly familiar with political matters. In the late 1910s, as a young committed student in Literature at the Moscow Institute for Women Higher Education, she had become a member of a group of Marxist young women.<sup>4</sup> After following the social-democratic mainstream throughout World War I, she took part in the February uprising in Moscow in 1917. In her memoirs she often voices opinions on certain relevant political issues of the revolutionary period.

The development of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* started when Sovkino, the mainstream Soviet State film company in the second half of the 1920s, asked for a feature-length documentary movie, which was meant to become the first public visual historical reconstruction of the 1917 February Revolution promoted by the Soviet establishment. The film was especially thought for the masses and was distributed on large-scale, as the press noticed when the film was released in March 1927.<sup>5</sup> Two years before, Sergei M. Eisenstein had directed *Battleship Potyomkin* (*Bronenosets Potyomkin*, 1925), one of the many silent Soviet films commemorating the 1905 Revolution. Inspired by Eisenstein’s spectacular cinematographic narrative, Shub came up with the idea of telling historical events by means of pure *montage*. Unlike Eisenstein though, Shub chose not to rely on staging, but rather on

<sup>4</sup> This particular group fought to change the entire society and assumed that women would benefit from this along with other oppressed groups. (Shub, *Krupnym Planom* [close-up] 23–32).

<sup>5</sup> See the period reviews included in the *Shub archival collection* located at the VGIK Institute. An anonymous reviewer closes his article in *Molot* (“Padenie Dinastii”) stating that the *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* will be studied as a book of history by the next generation of Russian communists. A similar statement is found in the reviews of Nedobrovo and Trauberg.



Esfir' Shub portrait.

archival non-fictional footage taken from Russian documentary films. At the same time, she followed Eisenstein in the choice to represent the rise of communism in Russia through a trilogy of epics, by conceiving *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* as the first title in a series of three.<sup>6</sup> The following two titles in Shub's trilogy, *Velyky put'* (the great way, 1927) and *Segodnia* (today, 1929), were produced by Narkompros shortly afterwards. Both Eisenstein's and Shub's works, then, were born as epic propaganda efforts to celebrate the October Revolution as the starting point of a new course of progress and civilization in the country's history.

Shub's project to create a kind of *visual book* of the Revolution was pursued by assembling various types of film documents. For this purpose Shub collected and restored numerous film prints, mainly from private sources that had been acquired by the newly formed Soviet government at the end of November 1918, and were since then stocked in national archives.

<sup>6</sup> The other two titles in Eisenstein's famous trilogy are *Strike* (*Stachka*, 1924-25), and *October* (*Oktiabr'*, 1928).

Part of this early film collection was stored in facilities (e.g. cellars, vaults, closets) belonging to wartime Russian cameramen. After the assignment, Shub studied the archive for a long time. The material included old newsreels of the Tzarist period, as well as nonprofessional and official footage of the imperial family. Shub even personally restored some of these prints that had fallen into a state of decay, and eventually succeeded in having the Soviet State purchase valuable material from the United States. These seemingly obsolete materials offered in fact plenty of scope for activity. Shub believed that a clear propaganda message could be shaped and communicated by means of a pure montage of documentary fragments. The whole process of research, restoration and editing lasted more than three years (Deriabin).

*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh* was completed on time to be released on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the February uprising, on March 11 (February 26, O. S.), 1927. Though this nonfiction work was tailor-made to give an official account of the February days through an ideological lens, it also offers an important, if somewhat involuntary source for the history of women's political agency in the early Soviet society.

#### *Vera Figner, a Revolutionist*

In the second part of *Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, the February riots following the downfall of autocracy are evoked as a prelude to the October, which is presented as the *real* Revolution. In this reconstruction, the involvement of the women's movement in the 1917 events is drastically compressed into a brief appearance of just thirty-five seconds, out of an overall duration of ninety minutes. Yet even this brief and apparently meaningless fragment can be studied as a historical object, through which to recover an unofficial memory of 1917—a social memory that may throw some light on a little known side of the history of the women's movement in Russia.

The footage under consideration is placed at the end of the sequence and shows the antiwar demonstrations during the first Provisional Government, after the fall of the Tsarist monarchy in February 1917. For just thirty-five seconds we see a mass comprising of about forty thousands women (amid whom many textile workers, housewives, war widows, manufacturers) marching in the streets of Moscow, claiming female suffrage and an expansion of legal rights. The scene was recorded on March 19 (April 1, O. S.), 1917, shortly after the outbreak of the insurrection in the February days. The women formed a huge parade, one of the largest, spontaneous mass rallies ever staged in Russia. The head of the march was led by a motorcar, guarded by a female militia mounted on horseback, on top of which stood Vera Figner with Poliksenia Shishkina-Yavein, next to some Bestuzhev students.<sup>7</sup> The historian

<sup>7</sup> The Bestuzhev Institute was one of the most enduring universities where women were admitted in St. Petersburg. In 1878 it opened its courses to women of all social classes (though in fact most students were girls from a gentry background), and four years later it had graduated about one hundred women. In 1883 the Institute hosted the Society for the Financing of Higher Women's Courses. The Society counted one thousand members and was directed by an executive committee largely composed of feminist leaders, such as Sofia Kovalevskaia. While other academic courses had stopped admitting women by the mid 1880s, the



Vera Figner, c. 1880. Public Domain, Wikimedia Commons.

Richard Stites has provided a reconstruction of the event in which he states that perhaps nowhere like at this parade the Bolsheviks and the feminists came closer to enter in strident conflict.

This impressive demonstration of feminist street politics had a disappointing, if not wholly unsuccessful, outcome. At the Tauride the demonstrators, who filled the broad Shpalernaya and the horseshoe driveway, had to wait for several regimental parades. Then Shishkina-Yavein made a stirring speech to Chkhheidze of the Soviet and Rodzianko of the Provisional Government, full of references to Figner and other heroines of the Revolution and ending with a categorial demand for a statement on women's suffrage. Chkhheidze, as always cautious and politic, uttered the words "we will struggle together with you for your justly deserved rights," which evoked a shout from the crowd "against whom?" Rodzianko temporized as well; but both won the applause from the assembled feminists and from Figner, who remained in the car to avoid the press of the crowd. (Stites 292–93).

This is exactly the scene that is briefly evoked in the mentioned fragment of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*. Vera Figner, a former member of the Russian Populist group known as *Narodnaia Volia* (the People's Will Party, 1879–87) is shown while she greets the people around the vehicle. Considering the film's strong ideological structure, the emergence of Vera Figner in this context might well have served a precise propaganda purpose.

Vera Nikolaevna Figner (1852–1842) was one of the leaders of the revolutionary Russian populist movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. As she recalls in her autobiography, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (*Zapechatlennyi trud*)—published in 1921 and repeatedly reprinted throughout the 1920s—her commitment to the socialist revolutionary movement began when she adhered to the *Zemlia i Volia* organization (the Land and Freedom Party), whose radical branch (the People's Will Party<sup>8</sup>) she joined in 1879. As a member of the People's Will, Figner embraced terrorism and was responsible for the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, in 1881. After the regicide, she left Petersburg and took refuge in Southern Russia, where she led the People's Will members that had escaped immediate arrest. Captured by the Tsarist police at the beginning of 1883, Figner was later condemned to death penalty by a military tribunal. The sentence however was commuted into life imprisonment, and for the next twenty years she was kept in an isolation cell at the Schlüsselburg fortress on Lake Ladoga. After the 1905 Revolution, Figner was allowed to expatriate in Europe, where she joined the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party in exile. She was back in Russia in 1915. Now old, she kept her political commitment toward socialism alive through underground

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Bestuzhev Institute was allowed to carry on its activities and to provide grants for women students. Several former Bestuzhevs' students were later involved in radical activities during the 1890s. (Stites 82–83; Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia 1700–2000* 108–115).

<sup>8</sup> The People's Will was the more radical of the two groups that were born in 1879 of a split inside the populist party *Zemlia i Volia*. The political aim of this organization was to overthrow the autocracy regime and to establish the people's government in Russia. After the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, by the hand of some of its members, the organization was harshly repressed by the Tsar and disintegrated in a short time.

literary and propaganda writing (Stites 50).

As the majority of Soviet foundation films, *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* was created in a complex relationship between the rulers and the ruled, between the production executives and the director. Shub had a personal knowledge of the Russian pro-suffrage movement since her University years—namely since her encounter with Nina Kolomeeva, a young socialist who had first introduced her to feminist and socialist student groups, as well as to Marxist literature and pamphlets by Herzen, Chernishevsky, and Plechanov (Shub, *Krupnym Planom* [close-up] 23–32). Yet the initiative to include a reference to Figner in the film is not likely to have been taken directly by Shub, but under the instructions of the Party, which were outed continuously throughout the editing process. The preliminary treatment, written by Shub and approved by Sovkino in 1926, does not refer to Figner in any of the film sequences, whether explicitly or implicitly (Shub, *Skhema Stsenarnogo Plana* 1–4). Figner's name was added only later in the editing script, along with a brief description of the 1917 street parade, and without any hint to her close involvement with the women's front. A third subject different from either Shub or the production executives, presumably introduced the reference after the completion of the script. There can be little doubt that the adjustment was required by the Soviet censorship office, since it is scribbled out on paper with a blue grease pencil, as was typical of the preventive intervention of Glavrepertkom [State head commission for approval of performers' repertoire] on any kind of written material either to be staged or published.

When Vera Figner appeared on screen in *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, she was still alive. By this time, however, her image etched more a public personality and a revolutionary icon than a supporter of the feminist movement. Together with Lenin, Figner is the only other historical figure who is mentioned in the intertitles. No mention is made to any other socialist leaders or relevant historical actors, such as, for instance, Figner's strict companion Shishkina-Yavein, who in 1917 chaired the most influential political league for women's rights, the *Soyuz ravnopraviiia zhenshchin* [all-Russian union for women's equality], also known as the Women's Union. The members of this league had attempted to coordinate their efforts with those of other socialist revolutionary groups (particularly within the social-democratic area) since the birth of their organization. Their goal was to create a common front in the fight against the restrictions to freedom imposed by the old autocratic order, reclaiming equal rights for all citizens. While educated women activists rarely succeeded in combining socialism and feminism, during and after the first Russian revolution of 1905, the Women's Union actually managed to forge alliances with several groups of women workers and peasants (Alpern Engel, "Women and the State" 468–71).

Before the Great War, the Women's Union did not enjoy large support, neither from the population nor from the political parties. However, its status changed rapidly soon after the outbreak of the war. As soon as the Union acquired the strength of an independent political force, the feminist participation in a left-wing coalition was reconsidered. On the eve of

the 1917 February Revolution, Shishkina led one of the most influent women's political organizations of the period, responsible for a number of legislative joint initiatives within the Third and Fourth State Duma, widely publicized at legal assemblies and debates. When, on March 1, 1917, the Council of the Union organized a massive street demonstration, women eventually obtained what they had been fighting for since at least a decade: that day by the evening, Prince L'vov, chair of the Provisional Government, declared women's right to vote, and therefore to participate in the election of the Constituent Assembly, forthcoming in November-December 1917.<sup>9</sup>

As commonly maintained, until the end of her life Vera Figner never adhered to Shishkina's League, nor to the feminist movement as a whole. Yet she was ready to give open moral support to the feminists and to the struggle for universal suffrage, by accompanying Shishkina in the March 1917 street parade that is reproduced in Shub's film. In the edited sequence, however, Figner appears more in the position of a people's heroine, than in that of a champion of the women's political front; her image fitted the case, as she was a woman who had been punished by the Tsar and had served twenty years in prison for her involvement in the assassination of Emperor Alexander II in 1881. Therefore, film spectators could be easily taken to perceive Figner's salutation to the crowd of women in Moscow as the re-appearance of a mythical survivor after a long period of asylum abroad.

In the film Figner is introduced in a caption as "an old revolutionary, a member of the People's Will Party," so as to emphasize her connection to a populist group that was no longer extant, neither in 1927, nor in 1917. In fact the People's Will Party had ceased to exist since the end of the nineteenth century, after a harsh repression during the last decade of the century. By restoring the People's Will Party to life, the Soviet propaganda was offering a deformed vision of history, one in which Vera Figner was presented as a living example of a single, never-ending struggle with deep roots in the past, in the attempt to build an ideal lineage that was meant to unite different revolutionary traditions (utopian socialists, nihilists, anarchists) under the flag of the Bolshevik Party.<sup>10</sup>

### *Women Faded into Oblivion*

The memory of the heroic period of nineteenth-century revolutionary attempts, marked by the violent punishments (arrests, beatings, executions, exiles) inflicted by the Tsarist monarchy on the political opposers—from Decembrist masons to the philo-republican United Slavs to moderate populists and nihilists—was especially cultivated by Soviet propaganda. After the 1917 October Revolution, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party began a process

<sup>9</sup> Between 1907 and 1912, the Women's Union gave its contribution to the Duma proceedings on issues concerning women's civil rights. The movement asked for bills on divorce, separate accommodations for couples, the right of women to practice law, and women's suffrage (Corigliano Noonan and Nechemias 77).

<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth exploration of the Russian revolutionary culture and the narrative strategies that were applied to political subjects in 1917, see Corney, one of the brilliant, pioneering works on the history of Russian revolution appeared in the last decade.



L. Petuchov, *Equality to Women*, 1917.

of rapid political proselytising, with the primary aim of moulding an official public memory of the past. This memory had two principal characteristics: it revolved around the myth of the October upsurge, and it was aimed to relegate the political culture of nineteenth-century insurrectional clandestine groups to the prehistory of the Revolution. Propaganda efforts were directed toward forging an ideal lineage that was to unite chosen elements of previous political groups (such as the parallel branch of the populists, i.e. the utopian socialists, the nihilists, and others) to the ruling party. In this context, a place of honor was reserved to the People's Will Party for its efforts in defense of the communitarian ideal, despite persecution and imprisonment. Its members were thus elevated to the status of *martyrs* of a never-before written history of failure and redemption (Venturi VII-CXII; Zverev 5-31).

The attempt to build a revolutionary genealogy can be seen in many other historical

films produced between 1918 and 1934, especially those whose stories revolved around well-known figures of terrorists and regicides of the extinct nihilist societies (Sergei Nechaev, Dmitrii Karakozov, Stepan Khalturin, along with other historical figures of nineteenth-century terrorism).<sup>11</sup> The filmic portrayal of the populists and their terrorist exploits was part of a larger phenomenon of wide-ranging publicity of relevant episodes in the long-term fight against Russian autocracy.

In *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, the first official Soviet film chronicle of the 1917 February Revolution,<sup>12</sup> the single recording of women's presence and political agency is related to the mythical icon of Figner, portrayed in the role of a populist leader. The intertitles make no mention to the situation in which we see her involved, nor to the significant role played by the women's democratic movement during the February days, which contributed to the collapse of the autocracy. On February 23, O.S., i.e. March 8 in the Western calendar, a huge rally of working-class women had thronged the streets of St. Petersburg during a strike at the major factories and plants in the city area. Even simple urban housewives were in a militant mood—not just working women, but the masses of women queuing for bread and kerosene.

Despite the rhetoric efforts made by the ideologists to build a connection between the Bolshevik Party and the tradition of Russian women's movements, the only feminist event that was given any resonance during the 1920s was the International Woman's Day, first celebrated in Russia in 1913. However, the real reason behind this choice was that the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party had chosen this relevant date to give resonance to its decision to join the ranks of the Bolshevik Party. As a consequence, many historical accounts, as well as propaganda material on the Bolshevik Party's support of feminism, made use of this early event to create a specific narrative, aimed at emphasizing the painful birth and triumphal advent of the Soviet age. From the standpoint of the Soviet ideologists, women's participation to the February days had therefore to be reduced to a form of "spontaneous" response to Bolshevik agitation (Chatterjee).

Although *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* was made to express the Party's utilitarian position on the history of the February Revolution in light of the subsequent October events, it still represents an important source for women's historical studies. Historians have

<sup>11</sup> Extant examples preserved in Russian film archives are *Veterany russkoi revoliutsii*, (veterans of the Russian revolution, 1924), and a series of three films directed by Aleksandr Ivanovsky: *Dvorets i krepost'* (the palace and the fortress, 1924), *Stepan Khalturin* (1925), *Dekabristy* (decembrists, 1927). I learned this information by analytically studying the entries reported in the annotated catalogue of Gosfil'mofond (National Film Foundation of Russian Federation), (Glagoleva, A. et. al.). Further information on Russian and Soviet films whose subjects strictly relate to the biographies of some historical Russian populists can be find at [Narovald.ru](#) (Troitskii 88-91).

<sup>12</sup> The first chronicles of the Revolution were made by the Skobelevsky War Committee, a professional team of cameramen and technicians created in 1914. Besides filming the February days, the Skobelevsky operators provided important documentation covering the whole period ranging from the Tsar's abdication to the Bolsheviks' rise to power. Their February 1917 footage was never fully edited nor distributed; the only complete filmic work comprising a portion of this footage is *Oktiabr'skii pereverot* (aka *Vtoraiia Revoliutsiia*; the second revolution, 1917) (Listov 30-31, 77-78).

widely shown that, during the war years 1916–17, women were the prime resource for the Russian economy, due to the extreme shortage of male workers: men were forced by massive conscription to serve in the Imperial Army, often to be killed in sanguinary fights at the warfront. While the film allows wide room for the representation of women as a powerful engine of the Russian Empire industrial development at the outbreak of World War I, and in its immediate aftermath, their relevance as political agents in the historical process is obliterated all throughout the plot. The single spot where the female suffragist movement makes an appearance, the sequence with Figner, is not overlaid by Shub with any commentary. As a result the identity of this movement remains undefined.

Across the political spectrum, from liberals to socialists, the Russian suffragists played a key function in interpreting the mood of a rapidly increasing number of women who were then entering the labor force. The so-called “woman question” became a burning issue in February 1917, when women went to strike as they had done in 1905, when long-simmering discontent had burst into a revolution that had given the feminist movement a particular urgency and strength. No doubt women played a significant role in exacerbating the socio-political struggle in 1917: pressure from their movement, as well as from the organized workers’ movement, contributed to push the Tsarist establishment to consider the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II (Stites 392–422).

Despite their extremely important role in the February days, only ten years later women could hardly find a place in the moulding of an official public image of the 1917 Russian revolution. Moreover, to defend the dictatorship they ruled, the Bolsheviks had to convey the idea that the February Revolution had been a failed revolution, a still immature event they could pretend to have brought to completion with their seize of power in October.

In conclusion, the thesis behind this investigation may be widened to a few other Soviet historical epics that were tailor-made on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. There is a significant absence of women considered as both a social and a political force in all the plots of the films set in 1917. Whether individual or collective, the characters who epitomize the revolutionary hero are regularly male in as many examples as *The End of St. Petersburg* (*Konets Sankt-Peterburga*, Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1927), *Moscow in October* (*Moskva v Oktiabre*, Boris Barnet, 1927), *The Eleventh Year* (*Odinnadtsatyi*, Dziga Vertov, 1928), and particularly in the giant example of *October*, a state production made with the intended purpose to achieve a popularity comparable to that of *The Ten Commandments* (Cecil B. De Mille, 1923), with Lenin substituting for Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> As with all of these films, the ideological historical narration offered in *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* was part of a prodigious State-sponsored program to establish a memory designed to enhance the Bolshevik rule over the Soviet society.

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<sup>13</sup> *October* had to contribute to cast the October revolution into an imagery celebrating the birth of the Soviet system. In order to pursue this goal, the state production displayed a budget twenty times the average budget of the Soviet film in their day, and Eisenstein was paid more than any other Soviet film director (Taylor 13).

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