



Film clips from Till, sequence made in Nice and Damme.
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Film set of Till in East-Germany. © by photographer: Manfred Klahre. Coll. Filmmuseum Potsdam/Nachlass Joop Huiskens.
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basin, Ivens yells: 'We will shoot this scene again in half an hour! There is too much smoke, the horses do not cavort enough and the bridge explosion is not as spectacular as it should be' ... The Dutch journalists could not believe what they saw. Their national history was being turned into a film in the French Riviera by 'a modest Dutchman'. They wanted to know from Ivens how the collaboration was going. 'Gérard and I, we each direct certain fragments. He, for instance, works a lot with the French actors, and does the work that requires the input of an experienced feature film man; I am responsible for the outside shoots and the action scenes. But we do not keep everything strictly separated; everything is fine the way it is.'²⁰

A journalist writes down: 'You cannot help but feel that everyone is extremely focused and what strikes us is the discipline, which stands out more than the cheerfulness. One also sees great camaraderie, with a massive sense and display of familiarity, you would have thought of it as impossible in France.'²¹ Two German actresses were pleased with Ivens and Philipe, since they were a pleasure to work with. 'They formed a delightful production collective', is what they told the press. The people responsible at DEFA, however, were seriously disappointed after the first press conference in Cannes: 'Die DEFA werd versteckt', not a single person from the French press mentions a word about the Germans' role, nothing is mentioned about their actors and the same applies for the role that Ivens plays.²² Philipe did not only claim the leading role as actor, but also as director. Henri Storck, who visited the set, even thought he remembered that there was a sign on one of the film studios' doors with the words 'no admittance for Mr. Ivens'. Ivens wrote to his friend Marion Michelle: 'Feel very alone and lonely these days. The people working on the film are all interested in other things, talking about women and food and food and women. They're always acting someone other than themselves.'²³ The shoots in Nice took longer than the two months they had planned and continued till the start of June. 'The weather was terrible, it rained all the time', is what they stated, because they could only use scenes that were filmed when the sun was out. Halfway that period, on April 18th and 19th, the whole world watched prince Rainier III of Monaco getting married to film star Grace Kelly, not far away from where the film was shot.

June 15th – June 22nd 1956 Damme, Belgium

Part of the film crew travelled to Flanders, Bruges, in order to add some authentic elements of the local colour to the film. The shots of the actual canal and the opening scene in the dunes and the countryside were filmed there. And the scene, in which the city of Damme goes up in flames. Meanwhile, Ivens became continuously more concerned about the direction in which the film was heading. 'Attention que l'action comique et dynamique ne domine pas, ou ébaufe la situation sérieuse.', he wrote.²⁴ After three months, he finally cut the knot and told DEFA that he wanted to back out of the film project. The following statement was written out in the hotel in Bruges: 'Already while working on the adaptation and shooting script he [Ivens] had observed the enormous difference between a film with actors and a documentary film. As a director of documentary films he underestimated the difficulties and complexity of a film with actors and he recognised that he was not equal to demands of contributing efficiently to the technical and artistic realisation of the Till film, and under these circumstances it was in the interest of the production that the mise-en-scène be the sole responsibility of Gérard Philipe.'²⁵ Later film reviews stated that Ivens would have backed out of the film project, because he had a fight with Philipe.²⁶ Later on, Ivens observed that Philipe 'let his brilliancy and quick reaction too much dominate in working with others. One thing he missed still in working was to create around him an atmosphere of artistic initiative of the members of his group.'²⁷ Whether it concerned a substantive disagreement, a different working method, a clash of personalities, or Iven's self-knowledge that caused Ivens to withdraw from the project, it had seemingly not affected his friendly relation with Philipe. Ivens stayed until the film was finished, but did not give any more directions.



June 25th - July 12th 1956, Mulde, Germany

On June 25th, Gérard Philipe and Joris Ivens arrived at Tempelhof airport in East Berlin together with the French crew, after the press and hundreds of fans had been waiting there for hours. 'Plenty of teen-agers came to see the 'jeune premier' of the French film', is what a journalist wrote, who was surprised that the fans were so hysterical. The last scenes in the GDR were all about the large-scaled battles on the banks of the Scheldt between the Spaniards, on the one hand, and the rebellions of the Geuzen army and the mercenary army of the Prince of Orange on the other. For the shots, the Scheldt was situated in the river de Mulde, a branch of the Elbe near Dessau. The production unit of DEFA led by Richard Brandt instructed 700 extras and 100 horsemen. The extras were recruited from the Volksarmee, and some workers of Agfa Wolfen and Elektrochemisch Kombinat Bitterfeld, who would eagerly have their picture taken with their hero Philipe.



Gérard Philipe and Joris Ivens, film clips in East Germany from Les aventures de Till l'Espiegle (The Adventures of Till Eulenspiegel), 1956.
© DEFA Stiftung

Gérard Philipe with 'actors' of the Volksarmee. Coll. Filmmuseum Potsdam/Nachlass Joop Huiskens.
©DEFA Stiftung/Pathenheimer, Manion

'Peng-sst!' Signal flare! Shoots through the air. Dark figures with halberds emerge from the dark etc.' Straight through the troops, you can see Lamme Goedzak driving his carriage and the runaway horses. The upper part of the carriage was mounted on top of a Packard for the shots. Pyrotechnists were running back and forth to make the explosions go off on time. Meanwhile, Lamme looked quite rotund; he had

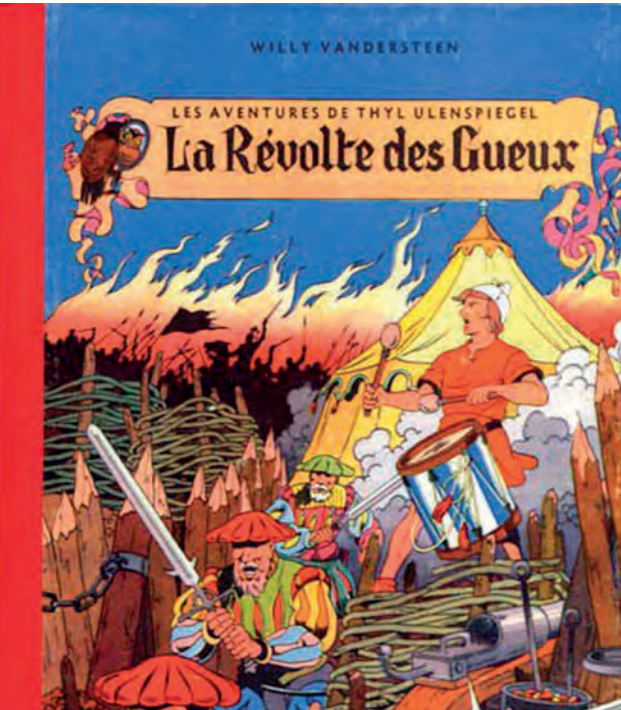


The carriage sequence. Coll. Filmmuseum Potsdam/Nachlass Joop Huiskens.
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gained 12 kilos after more than three months of scenes involving consuming food. The Volkspolizei pioneered a 1.20 metres high under water bridge, enabling the Orange army to reach the other side whilst wading through the Scheldt. Gérard Philipe walks into the producer's tent arm in arm with Joris Ivens, acting almost fatherly, and declares why Philipe had taken over production: 'Bei der Dreharbeiten hat es sich herausgestellt. Ich komme vom Dokumentarfilm, meine Probleme liegen auf einer anderen Seite. Gérard ist seit acht Jahren beim Spielfilm. Er hat die Künstlerische Unruhe, die ein Regisseur unbedingt braucht, Es war sein Wunsch Regie zu führen, und er führt sie ausgezeichnet.'²⁸ The shots were completed with a press conference in Raguhn, where Philipe also had to answer questions of a political nature. Philipe declared that he was opposed to rearmament, he praised the collaboration with the East Germans and expressed his hopes for more.²⁹



Reception in Paris and the GDR
Everyone had high hopes for this film, since this remarkable film project had received so much press attention in various countries. However, when a journalist from Le Monde got to see the preview on October 20th, the tone was set: 'One a movie actor, the other a documentary film maker. Soon on into the film, it became clear that their close friendship was being placed in serious jeopardy.' Due to the mounting tensions in the Eastern Bloc, the film's tenor actually turned against the East Germans. On November 4th, Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary to crush the national uprising.



Willy Vandersteen, Two covers of Till l'Espiègle, 1954/1955. © Standaard Uitgeverij.

When the film premiered in Paris on November 7th, plenty of people drew a parallel between Till, the Geuzen and the Hungarian freedom fighters. The humour and entertainment value of the film felt out of place, as the French were demonstrating against and in favour of the uprising in the streets. The film was also disappointing from an artistic point of view. It is true that the camera work of Christian Matras and Alain Douarinou, as well as the art direction, were highly praised, the colourful picture album filled with Breughelesque landscapes was truly a treat for the eye, but one could no longer recognise the Flemings' fierce struggle, their hatred and urge for freedom, and Till's cunningness, because all of the caricatural jokes. 'An epileptic clown', 'A solo performance of a Kleist character', and 'awkward madness', is what the Demain critic called the film, 'I have rarely seen such a rudimentary script as the one from M. Barjadel, seconded, it has to be said, by the people responsible.' 'Chaotic action, in which the most elementary laws of filmic structure are sacrificed, rarely heard such heavy dialogues' Ivens responded to the French situation in a personal letter: 'How did Till go? Did you keep some clippings for me. Did the public go to see the film. The critics were pretty bad, I heard, I saw none. I have much regrets that I did not take the project in my hands, as I did my other films. This 'escapade in fiction' was not a success, and my force deceny and sincerety did not come through this time, because I had some weak moments in the beginning. Tant pis. Next film better. What, I don't know.'³⁰ Two weeks after the French premiere, two hundred invitees could see the film for the first time during a special preview in Berlin, where Ivens detected a good atmosphere in the room. 'I paid more attention to the people's faces than to what happened on the screen and I observed how everyone was responding. They laughed at the comical scenes, they were watching intently when the film was dramatic.'³¹ Careful criticism regarding the fact that nothing of De Coster's brilliantness remained was parried by Ivens with the statement that De Coster's novel was some sort of unassailable Bible, which 'they had to make into a film that could only last one hour and a half.' On January 4th 1957, it was time for the East German premiere in the Theater der Werktätigen, where hundreds of workers, who had played extras such as soldiers and Geuzen, would be the first ones to see the film. 'They



Gérard Philipe and Joris Ivens, film clip: the general Steelarm being fooled by Till, from Les aventures de Till l'Espiègle (The Adventures of Till Eulenspiegel), 1956. ©DEFA-Stiftung/Pathenheimer, Manion

praised the chef for the evening bread, but now that the menu is being served, it does not taste very well', is what the Berliner Zeitung wrote. 'The film is filled with paradoxes and blunders, there is no harmony, the mosaic structure is lacking dramatic unity and suddenly you have a 'topsy-turvy' ending.' Despite these critiques and the political context, the film was quite well received by the public, both in France, Italy and Germany and was viewed by millions. Three years after the premiere, Gérard Philipe suddenly died of liver cancer, due to which he was unable

to come back with a strong performance after his first directing debut. Although Ivens would no more venture upon the path of fiction, he still continued to integrate played scenes in his personalised documentaries.

On March 22nd 2009, the Cinémathèque française in Paris screened *Les aventures de Till l' Espiègle* on a Sunday afternoon during a family programme, and set an example that was followed by others. That is why the first film about Till received the status of being a richly upholstered and funny historical children's film.

1 Joris Ivens in an interview with Henri Sandberg, *De Telegraaf*, 21-12-1956.
2 Joris Ivens in an interview with the New York Times, March 8th 1936, quoted in André Stufkens, 'Unfatal Attraction: Joris Ivens and the USA', in Stufkens (ed.), *Joris Ivens. Cinema without Borders*, cat. 2002, p. 47.
3 Gérard Philipe in an interview with the *National Zeitung*, 21-07-1956. Philipe received a price for his acting performances in the play 'Le diable au corps' in Knokke. The Belgian friend of Philipe was the surrealist painter Félix Labisse, who bought him the book written by De Coster.
4 Henri Storck in an interview with Willem Dauw and Guido Van Meir, 'Het wordt erg. Het is tijd', in Johan Swinnen & Luc Deneulin (red.), *Henri Storck memoreren*, Brussels 2007, p. 137-138.
5 Marc Silberman, see note 4, p. 23.
6 Joris Ivens, notities met herinneringen, for article about Philipe, in both a French and English version, JIA, file 320. Both Ivens' wife, the Polish poetess and translator Ewa Fiszer, as Philipe's wife, the writer Anne Philipe, were present during the lunch.
7 Marc Silberman, 'Learning from the enemy: DEFA-French co-productions of the 1950s.' In *Film History*, Vol. 18, No. 1, Cold-War German Cinema, Indiana University Press 2006, p. 29. In 1954, a new organisational structure was set up for the GDR film industry under the control of the Hauptverwaltung Film, a department of the Ministry of Culture, led by Anton Ackermann. Ivens' friend Hans Rodenberg led the DEFA-Studio für Spielfilme, the studio that commissioned the Till film, whilst Ivens, who was employed by the DEFA-Studio für Wochenschau und Dokumentarfilme, was supported by his producer there, Hans Wegner.
8 Marc Silberman, see note 4, p. 24.
9 Joris Ivens to Marion Michelle, undated April/May 1954. Coll. Marion Michelle / ESJI.
10 Joris Ivens in a letter to Gérard Philipe, Berlin, April 16th 1954. JIA, map 316
11 Ibidem
12 Joris Ivens, letter to Philipe, December 22nd 1954. Coll. Hans Wegner, file 302.
13 Gérard Philipe in a letter to Joris Ivens, December 25th 1954. Coll. Hans Wegner, file 302.
14 Jan de Hartog in a card sent to Joris Ivens, May 10th 1955. Coll. Hans Wegner, file 302.
15 'Notes Joris. Sur le Scénario de de Hartog', typescript, undated Coll. Hans Wegner, file 303.
16 Joris Ivens about Philipe, see note 6.
17 'Notes sur 'Till (Gérard)', with points of criticism by Philipe on the script of De Hartog, typescript, undated Coll. Hans Wegner, file 303.
18 Joris Ivens about Philipe, see note 6.
19 *De Gelderlander*, 'Tijl Uilenspiegel' [Till Eulenspiegel], tweemaal in de gracht is genoeg, Saturday May 26th 1956.
20 Sem Davids, 'Tijl Uilenspiegel. Een dag in de studio bij de verfilming door Joris Ivens en Gerard Philipe' [Till Eulenspiegel. A day in the film studio with Joris Ivens and Gerard Philipe], *De Groene Amsterdammer*, April 28th 1956.
21 Ibidem
22 G. Geisler in the *Morgenpost*, April 29th 1956.
23 Joris Ivens to Marion Michelle, undated, Coll. Marion Michelle, EFJI, Nijmegen.
24 Note Joris Ivens about film, undated Coll. Hans Wegner, file 309.
25 Marc Silberman, see note 4, p. 29.
26 See e.g. Jan Blokker, 'Films van de week' [Films of the week], *Algemeen Handelsblad*, January 24th 1959
27 Joris Ivens about Philipe, see note 6.
28 *Berliner Zeitung*, July 3rd 1956.
29 *National Zeitung*, July 12th 1956.
30 Joris Ivens in a letter to Marion Michelle, December 18th 1956, Warsaw. Coll. Marion Michelle, EFJI. Ivens left for China for a couple of months and already discussed the film plan of the Seinefilm with George Sadoul. He also planned to work on the Chagall film together with Henri Langlois, when he was back in Paris.
31 *Berliner Zeitung am Abend*, November 20th 1956.

Ernest Hemingway and
Martha Gellhorn

HEMINGWAY, GELLHORN AND IVENS IN FICTION

HBO drama starring Nicole Kidman,
Clive Owen, Lars Ulrich,
Robert Duvall and Peter Coyote.

ANDRÉ STUFKENS



Ernest Hemingway and
Martha Gellhorn in China
after their marriage, 1941.

time when such jobs were almost exclusively the province of men. ‘She didn’t believe in being objective as a journalist; she believed in having an opinion,’ Kidman said. Gellhorn’s advice to colleague journalists: ‘Write what you see. I never believed in that objectivity shit’. Hemingway is at first attracted to Gellhorn’s independence but eventually has trouble dealing with her strong will. Kidman sees an irony given Hemingway’s evident desire to find a woman who could be his equal. ‘When he finally finds it, he doesn’t know what to do with it,’ she said (Los Angeles Times, 13 January 2012).

Between 1936 and 1945

The love affair lasted eight years, from 1936 to 1945. The story begins when the pair first meet at Sloppy Joe’s Bar in Key West, Florida, around Christmastime 1936. Upon hearing Hemingway was headed to Spain to cover the Spanish Civil War, the ambitious, maverick Gellhorn, then 28, made a decision to go also, to cover the war for *Collier’s Weekly*. It was in Spain where Hemingway and Gellhorn came together, because they were attracted to intense situations, and fell in love. She sympathized passionately with the democratically elected socialist government of Spain in its fight against the fascist generals led by Francisco Franco. In Madrid the new couple met Joris Ivens and John Ferno. Hemingway soon joined the small film crew and contributed to the film shooting on the war front. Both Gellhorn and Hemingway were impressed by the Dutch filmmaker. According to them he was funny and calm, even on the frontline. After their return to the US, Hemingway wrote

this relationship, Hemingway and Gellhorn had a secret meeting with Zhou Enlai too. In 1944 Gellhorn covered the liberation of Western-Europe when she followed the US Army after D-Day. She wrote an article ‘A Little Town in Holland’ about the liberation of Ivens’s birthplace Nijmegen at the moment when Ivens was in the US. She fell in love with US general James Gavin, the liberator of Nijmegen. In 1945 Gellhorn asked Hemingway for a divorce.

Gellhorn’s Personal letters

What Hollywood is going to make of the love story or what mystification surrounding Ivens will be dramatized will remain unknown until May. The many personal letters of Gellhorn, published in 2006, were used to shape the script. During a preview of a film clip of *Hemingway & Gellhorn* voice overs with direct quotes from Gellhorn’s letters can be heard. While Gellhorn’s wartime dispatches rank among the best of the century, her personal letters are their equal: as vivid and fascinating, open and emotional, as anything she ever published. When The Washington Post reviewed the letters in 2006 they already asked: ‘Where is the Martha Gellhorn biopic? Why hasn’t some enterprising movie producer figured out that this writer’s rip-roaring life is the stuff of breathless action-adventure?’ In fact the same counts for the life of Joris Ivens, it is worthy of a biopic.

Stephen Koch’s ‘The Breaking Point’

In addition to Gellhorn’s letters, another source of information for the scriptwriters of *Hemingway & Gellhorn* might be Stephen Kochs ‘The Breaking Point’, a novel published



Philip Kaufman, Hemingway
& Gellhorn, 2012. © HBO-TV,
New York.

With Clive Owen (as Ernest
Hemingway), Santiago
Cabrera (as Robert Capa),
Nicole Kidman (as Martha
Gellhorn) and Lars Ulrich
(as Joris Ivens) in a fictional
situation. They never were at
the Spanish Civil War front
together.

Actor James Gandolfini, who played Tony Soprano in HBO’s smash hit series *The Sopranos*, peddled the film plan about the tumultuous love story of Martha Gellhorn and Ernest Hemingway, the most celebrated literary couple in America, for six years. In March 2011, director Philip Kaufman started - shooting - *Hemingway & Gellhorn* in San Francisco. Nicole Kidman and Clive Owen are playing the roles of war correspondent Martha Gellhorn and the American writer. Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich is playing Joris Ivens. Dutch photographer Anton Corbijn, a friend of Ulrich, asked the Ivens Foundation for sound recordings of Ivens’s voice that could help Ulrich practise

Ivens’s pronunciation of the English language. The film series will be broadcasted in the US starting in May. Director Philip Kaufman has made his mark as a screenplay writer of the *Indiana Jones*-series and as a director of *The Right Stuff*, *The Wanderers*, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and the remake of *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

‘That objectivity shit’

Martha Gellhorn’s heroic career as a reporter brought her to the front lines of virtually every significant international conflict between the Spanish Civil War and the end of the Cold War. She was a globe-trotting war correspondent at a

the commentary text, of which Ivens skipped half. Gellhorn became Ivens’s PR agent to promote the documentary. She arranged a meeting at the White House with president Roosevelt, because she was friends with Eleanor Roosevelt and presidential adviser Hopkins. After the meeting Gellhorn wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt: ‘You did like the film didn’t you? [...] I think Joris did a magnificent job and it is a record of personal bravery that you get decorated for in any war but this one...’ (8 July 1937).

When Hemingway and Gellhorn married they sailed off for a long trip in China in 1941, three years after Ivens had worked in China and had met Zhou Enlai. Thanks to

in 2005. In an exciting fictionalized story Koch tries to describe what happened in Spain, when Hemingway, Dos Passos and Ivens were working together on *The Spanish Earth*. The friendship between the American writers broke up because of their political differences. Dos Passos did not only dislike the Communist intrigues, he also disapproved of the blooming secret love affair between Hemingway and Gellhorn, which he witnessed when arriving in Madrid in April 1937. It is very obvious that Koch’s black-and-white ‘good guy-bad guy’ scheme praises Dos Passos and condemns the Dutch film crew. According to Koch’s fiction Ivens, Van Dongen and John Fernhout were all Komintern agents, who

Joris Ivens, Ernest Hemingway
and German writer Ludwig
Renn, 1937. Coll. JLA / EFJL.

tried to lure Hemingway into Communist propaganda. In Koch's lines, Helen van Dongen became the perfect Soviet spy: 'she was just as smart, and just as chic - a tricky mix of innocence and experience, small breasted, supple, and so sexy it was a little scary'. Koch obviously never met Helen van Dongen, his description contradicts any comment written by contemporaries of Van Dongen. Even Ivens's cameraman John Ferno (Fernhout) who came from Amsterdam to do the wonderful shooting of the film was labelled by Koch a 'crypto-communist apparatchik' and 'another Comintern apparatchik'. Actually, Ferno was completely anti-political, both according to his wife Eva Besnyö and everybody who knew him. Ferno made films for the Marshall Plan after the war and there is not any proof that he was a Communist or an 'apparatchik'. The word 'Comintern-agent', too easily used by Koch to label Ivens, suggests that Ivens was on the payroll of Comintern. This is wittingly false. Although Ivens was in contact with Münzenberg, Katz and other Comintern people, this does not make him an agent. This is just speculation by Koch, who condemns every artist who dares to express any trace of political engagement.

Dos Passos: 'The Trouble with Facts'

Koch's fiction is obsessed by prejudice, exaggerations and factual mistakes. In part, it is based on Dos Passos' own memories too, which were published in fictionalised chronicles entitled 'Century's Ebb', particularly on the chapters 'The Documentary' and 'The Trouble with Causes'. These texts were written during the 1960s, when Dos Passos's political views had already switched from left wing to right wing for a long time. At that time he supported politicians like Barry Goldwater and Richard Nixon and adored Joseph McCarthy 'like a fan in front of the Beatles'. 'I was the one who suggested this damn documentary', John Dos Passos claims in his chronicles about his involvement in *The Spanish Earth*. According to him, he also chaired the first meeting of Contemporary Historians Inc., the group of liberals who supported the idea of producing a film on the warfront in Spain in order to raise money for relief. Ernest Hemingway, Archibald McLeish, Dorothy Parker, Lillian Hellman, Clifford Odets and Herman Shumlin joined him at the fashionable Manhattan restaurant '21', at 52 West 52nd street, where the incorporation papers were signed. Everybody gathered, except filmmaker Ivens. 'What about this Dutch bloke?', Hemingway asked his friend Dos Passos. 'Everything says he is the best documentary film man since Eisenstein', responded Dos Passos. 'Bring him in', Hemingway shouted, 'he's the most important man here'. With his shock of wavy black hair above blue eyes and smooth cheeks Ivens did look like a highschool boy playing hockey. In spite of their vivid style, Dos Passos' memories were wrong; such a meeting could never have taken place. Hemingway did not arrive in New York until January 1937, a time when Ivens had already left for Spain. It was in Paris that the two would meet for the first time, before they left for Madrid. This is just one of the many mistakes in Dos Passos' chapters.

Ivens

The same applies to Ivens's memories about his short collaboration with Dos Passos, written 6 and 45 years after the events and published in his two autobiographies. Ivens dated Dos Passos's arrival in February 1937: 'A few days later [after Ivens's and Ferno's arrival in Madrid on January 21st 1937] John Dos Passos joined our team. He also came from Paris.' According to Ivens's chronology, the shooting at Fuentedueña took place in February, which can easily be proved wrong simply by watching the sunny images of



the film in spring time and the flourishing new plants. Dos Passos did not enter Spain until April and he met Ivens and the crew for the first time in Fuentedueña, on April 18th. At that time, Ivens had already been shooting in this village for one week, after having searched for this village himself quite a long time (starting on February 7, finding it on April 6). This fact also contradicts Koch's strange accusation that Ivens and Hemingway were completely focussed on warfare and bloody action, while his 'hero' Dos Passos was mainly interested in social change, the agricultural revolution. However, from the very beginning the essence of the film was the idea of integrating land reform with the freedom of the country. That is the double meaning of the title 'The Spanish Earth', invented by McLeish. Without bread no fight, without the revolution in the countryside no victory in the cities. This idea was part of the first synopsis that was drawn up in New York by Ivens. It was already in New York, after a preparatory meeting with Contemporary Historians Inc., that Ivens noted: 'Filmgroup connected with daily life and fight of a family (peasant family).' Ivens and Dos Passos worked together for four or five days at the most, the final day of shooting was April 22. They left Madrid by car together on April 25 before departing Spain.

Speculation

The complexity of the Spanish labyrinth even became more labyrinthine by these many - even contradictory voices - in fiction. Will the feature film *Hemingway & Gellhorn* avoid the speculations, prejudices and imaging when it is based on fictionalized sources and present the nuances? Does film fiction based on novel fiction based on chronicle fiction, becomes truth?

The HBO-series starts on 28th of May in the USA
and on the 22th of July, 8.30 PM in the Netherlands. www.itsHBO.nl



Philip Kaufman, Hemingway & Gellhorn, 2012. © HBO-TV, New York.
Joris Ivens, The Spanish Earth, 1937 © CAPI Films, Paris.

An., John Fernhout, Joris Ivens, John Dos Passos and a kid at Fuentedueña, during the shooting of The Spanish Earth, April 1937. Coll. JIA/EFJL.

The Spanish Earth ’s Release in Spain in the Civil War



The Spanish Earth was not commercially released in the US

THE DOCUMENTARY THE SPANISH EARTH WAS SHOWN AT THE WHITE HOUSE ON 8 JULY 1937, THANKS TO THE FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE WRITER MARTHA GELLHORN AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, THE WIFE OF THE US PRESIDENT. IN THE SPRING OF THAT YEAR, IN SPAIN, GELL-HORN HAD MET ERNEST HEMINGWAY, THE WRITER OF THE DOCUMENTARY’S SCREENPLAY. THE COUPLE WOULD EVEN- TUALLY MARRY IN 1940¹.

MAGÍ CRUSELLS

because the mainstream distributors felt that its contents might be excessively controversial. The film was taken on by the independent firm Prometheus Pictures, based in New York, and was shown widely by cultural associa- tions, progressive institutions, universities, and so on. In this way, the two objectives of the film were fulfilled, to some extent at least: to inform the American public of the situation in Spain and the Civil War, and to raise funds for the Republican cause.

Advertisement Tierra
Espanola (The Spanish
Earth), ABC, 16 August 1937.

The reception of the documentary in Spain

Francoist agents in the US

Franco’s State Delegation for Press and Propaganda was interested in viewing the film and instructed its agents in the US to obtain a copy. The Francoist agent Nena Belmonte reported to her superiors that she was trying to obtain a copy so that they could see “what the foreign public want. If we could do something along the same lines, it would not only serve as excellent propaganda, but would help us to obtain a foothold in America”². She included a press cutting of the review by José Enamorado Cuesta, published in *La Voz* on 27 August, entitled “The film *The Spanish Earth*, a great success”.

Juan Francisco de Cárdenas, a Francoist agent in New York who had previously been Ambassador of the Spanish Republic in Washington between March 1932 and June 1934, wrote a report to the head of Franco’s State Delegation for Press and Propaganda dated 8 September 1937, in which he stated the following:

“*The Spanish Earth* was made in Red Spain by a group of writers from the US who set up their own company, Contemporary Historians Inc. The director is the Dutchman Joris Ivens, and Hemingway takes part in it. It is an avowedly Red propaganda film. It was screened in private at the White House to the US president Mr Roosevelt and his wife, who were full of praise for it. Their enthusiasm for the film was undoubtedly excellent propaganda, since their comments were widely reported in the press and sparked protests from certain newspapers and Catholic organizations. This film is shown at a small local cinema [the 55th St. Playhouse in New York] and always attracts large audiences, for the reasons mentioned above”³.

De Cárdenas included three reviews from US newspapers: *La Prensa*, *Daily Worker*, and *The Sun*. The first two spoke highly of the film. In an article in the *Daily Worker* entitled “Spanish Earth, a great, dynamic portrayal of the heroic People’s Front fighting fascism”, published on 20 July, the critic David Platt claimed that the film was: “one of the three or four great documentary films ever made ... To say that it is one of the grandest collective jobs of producing, directing photography, editing, sound direction and musical scoring the films have seen in ages, is not nearly enough. One must say more – much more. One must say that the fact that the makers of *Spanish Earth*, Joris Ivens, Ernest Hemingway and John Ferno, were supremely fortunate in being able to leave Spain alive, to tell their story to the world, (a) story ... in such desperate

need of telling ...; and not all the combined armies of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini could stop it from being told. One must say more than this. One must say that it is humanly impossible for any warm-blooded man or woman to sit through the film without feeling a burning need now, here, at once, this very minute to do something to support the epic, Homeric battle of the Spanish people for the right to live like human beings. One must say that it is up to those of us who are opposed to Fascism, who believe in Spain with all our might and main, to move heaven and earth and hell if necessary, to see that *Spanish Earth* is given the hearing it deserves, so that the Spanish people in their hour of need are given the hearing they so richly deserve.”

The unsigned review in *La Prensa* of 20 August, entitled “The Spanish Earth, a faithful film document of the revolution in Spain”, stressed that it was the best propaganda film made so far in favour of the Republican cause: “(its) photographic art (sic) is such that, without even the need for a word in the narration, the film’s subject becomes visible and its message gently and steadily takes hold of the auditorium. This production is far removed from the clichéd forms we find in other depictions of the Spanish Civil War. It is a document that defends the people’s right to obtain sustenance from their fertile land which formerly belonged to a small group of rich land-owners”.

In contrast, the review published on 23 August in *The Sun*, signed with the initials J.H.D. and entitled “The Spanish Earth, loyalist propaganda at the Fifty-fifth Street Playhouse”, was critical of the documentary. It accused the director of using images from other films (a charge which in fact was entirely false), described the film as simplistic, and chastised it for presenting the suffering of only one part of the Spanish people, those on the Republican side.

The film’s release in Barcelona and Madrid

In the summer of 1937 it was announced that Film Popular, a cinematographic company run by the Spanish Communist Party, would soon release the documentary entitled *Tierra española*. The back page of the Republican edition of *ABC* of 16 August held a full page advertisement, featuring the screening at the White House. In fact, the showing at the White House was always mentioned in the publicity for the film. For example, *La Voz Valenciana* of 25 September 1937 reported that President Roosevelt, after seeing the film, had exclaimed “Why has nobody told me the truth about what is happening in Spain?”, and *La Vanguardia* of 24 April 1938 spoke of “the film that moved the world. Shown to President Roosevelt and the delegates of the League of Nations. A living testimony of our struggle”.

Tierra española was shown commercially for the first time in Barcelona on 25 April 1938 at the cinema Cataluña, sharing the bill with the Soviet feature film *Yunost Maksima* [*The Youth of Maxim*] (Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg, 1935) and another documentary that was not named in the press. The film ran at the Femina for two weeks. Over the next three months it was shown at the following venues in Barcelona:

- from 9 to 15 May at the Astoria and the Maryland
- from 16 to 22 May at the Smart

- from 23 to 29 May at the Excelsior
- from 30 May to 5 June at the Arenas
- from 6 to 12 June at the Durruti
- from 13 to 19 June, not shown
- from 20 to 26 June it returned to the Excelsior, now sharing the bill not with *The Youth of Maxim* but with the US dramas *Shopworn* (1932), by Nick Grinde, and *Range Feud* (1931), by David Ross Lederman
- from 27 June to 3 July at the Alianza, along with the horror film *The Invisible Ray* (1936) by Lambert Hiller, the thriller *Koenigsmark* (1935) by Maurice Tourneur and the Spanish documentary *Sanidad* (*Health*).

In fact the film was also presented before its commercial release at a special session on 24 April at the Astoria, organized by the *Casa de la Cultura*, the Republican government’s Propaganda Office, and *Film Popular*. The screening was attended by Hemingway himself (who received a warm ovation and was obliged to greet the audience), various military and political figures, the Diplomatic Corps, and the press. The Spanish writer Corpus Barga introduced the film⁴. A review published in the bulletin of *Film Popular* praised Hemingway’s script and the images, which: “apart from their cinematographic merits – continuity, rhythm, artistry and the human interpretation of the subject – possess a great political and social importance. The images give an eloquent, vibrant and dramatic vision of the essence of our struggle: the defence of a government that the people has freely chosen; the love for a land which we hope to make more fertile every day; the categorical rejection of any attempt at domination by others. And on the other side, the inhuman, bloody and ferocious cruelty of the totalitarian states: children and women struck down; houses in ruins; works of art destroyed and the earth of Spain soaked with the blood of its children in the most unjust and inhumane war ever seen in a civilized country”⁵.

With the commercial presentation in Barcelona imminent, a glowing (though unsigned) review appeared in *La Vanguardia* on 24 April, entitled “The expressive value of the film *The Spanish Earth*”: “*Spanish Earth* brings the clamour of our struggle to all the peoples of the universe. In the English-speaking countries, the film has brought home the true character of our Republican ideal, the true nature of our suffering. Its images, crude, realistic and accusatory, constitute the strongest argument – stronger than any speech, or any book – against Fascism”.

The showing on the 25th was interrupted in Barcelona by a bombardment and reported by the American reporter Vincent Sheean’s *New York Tribune*, who attended the screening: “The film was stopped in the middle by an air raid and we sat in the theater for about an hour, waiting until the alarm ended. It was not a very good place to be during an air raid, and the audience might have been forgiven a certain amount of nervousness, but in point of fact there was none apparent”⁶

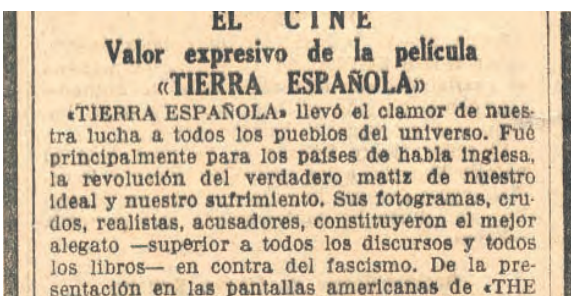
Vincent Sheean was with Jim Lardner, who had credential from the New York *Herald-Tribune*, and Marty Houriham, an American volunteer in the XVth International Brigade who had been wounded at Brunete in July 1937.



French poster The Spanish
Earth (Jean Renoir version).
Coll. JIA/EFJL



Ernest Hemingway and Joris
Ivens. Coll JIA/EFJL.



Tierra española was shown in Madrid for the first time on 23 May at the Rialto. It ran for two weeks: during the first week it shared the bill with a variety show featuring Charito España and Anita Jovellanos, and during the second alongside the Hollywood musical comedy *King Kelly of the USA* (Leonard Fields, 1934). But the film ran for only a short time, far less than in Barcelona. It was withdrawn between 6 June and 17 July, shown at the cinema Bilbao for a week from 18 to 24 July, again from 25 to 31 at the cinema Carretas, reappeared at the Metropolitano from 8 to 14 August and from 15 to 21 at the cinema Durruti. It was withdrawn between 22 August and 11 September, but shown for a week at the cinema Doré from 12 to 18 September, from 26 September to 2 October at the cinema Flor and from 10 to 16 October at the cinema Dos de Mayo.

One of the reasons for the lack of success of Ivens’s documentary in Madrid was that the audiences preferred to watch escapist American movies rather than political documentaries that reminded them of the war. The city was already under siege by Franco’s troops. In fact Franco’s army was very near the centre and was already in control of several areas in the city (part of the Ciudad Universitaria, for example). As a result, and also because of the continuous bombardments, many people had left Madrid. In addition, Madrid was no longer the capital – the seat of the Republican government was now Barcelona – and the lack of investment in the industry of any kind and the dwindling audiences meant that some Madrid cinemas were forced to close down, while others nearest the combat zone were damaged or destroyed.

Today, no complete copies of the Spanish version of *The Spanish Earth* have survived. After the end of the war, the National Cinematographic Department of Francoist Spain decided to keep the films made by both sides at the Riera film laboratories in Madrid, but a large number were lost in a fire in August 1945.

The commentary of *Tierra española* was by the journalist Arturo Perucho – the regular narrator of *Film Popular*, the firm that distributed *The Spanish Earth* – and was quite faithful to the original⁷. In summer 1937 *Film Popular* announced that the documentary would be shown shortly, but in fact it was not released for almost a year, for reasons that remain unknown⁸. Rodolfo Halffter and Carlos Jiménez corrected the *faux pas* of the musical score in the US version, which had included *La Santa Espina*, a *sardana* that was a patriotic anthem for Catalan nationalists⁹. Joris Ivens declared years later: “For me the choice of the music was not a serious error because it did not detract in any way from the content of the film, but the Spanish found it intolerable”¹⁰.

The Audiovisuals Archive at the Filmoteca de Catalonia preserves two reels with part of the audio of a South American version of Ivens’s documentary entitled *Tierra de España*. The commentary is dubbed in Spanish and corresponds to all of reel two and the end of reel six. It is the only extract of the Spanish commentary of the film that has survived. In all, the footage lasts some fourteen minutes.

In the last three minutes of the film, dedicated to the Republican counterattack which has managed to keep the road between Madrid and Valencia free, in the US version a *sardana* is heard before the *Himno de Riego*, the national anthem of the Second Republic, but in the South American version the Catalan tune disappears. In the spoken text

there are also some slight modifications. For example Julián calls his father “*papa*”, in Spanish, in *The Spanish Earth* – as it appears in the script written by Hemingway and in the later published version – while in the South American version this is dubbed as “*padre*”¹¹.

Epilogue

Joris Ivens did not return to Spanish soil until October 1977, almost two years after the death of General Franco, when he was invited by the Ninth International Week of *cine de autor* in Benalmádena (Málaga) which was to show the film *The Spanish Earth*. After the screening Ivens gave a press conference. He expressed his pleasure on returning to Spain, where, he said, he had come to fight with his camera, just as others had done with their pens or their rifles. He acknowledged that “there was no question of objectivity. There was a people fighting for a cause which I identified with, and I saw myself as a defender and a protagonist of this cause”¹². In February 1985, he returned once more to receive the gold medal for Fine Arts awarded by the Ministry of Culture. Forty-eight years after making the film, Ivens returned to Fuentedueña. The historian Spanish Roman Gubern went with him and remembers the visit as follows. “I accompanied Joris Ivens on a visit to Fuentedueña because I had previously suggested to Pilar Miró, the Minister of Culture in Felipe González’s Socialist government, that he should be awarded the medal for Fine Arts. The award was duly announced and when Ivens came to Spain I was informed of his arrival. He said that he would like to visit Fuentedueña. He walked through the village and found that everything had changed. He told me that Hemingway and he had stayed at the house of the priest, next to the church. Suddenly, an old man recognized him and called him “the Dutchman”, as he had been known during the war. Ivens did not believe that the man truly remembered him, but the man convinced him by showing him where he (Ivens) had placed the camera to film a scene in one of the streets. In Fuentedueña no one had seen the film. Ivens asked after Julián, the protagonist. No one remembered him, until eventually someone told Ivens that Julián had left for Madrid after the war and had retired from his job in a bingo hall after Franco’s death, but we were unable to interview him”¹³.



Contrasting Images

A new book on the subject of Cinema and the Spanish Civil War was published last year by the Filmoteca de Catalunya: ‘Imatges confrontades: la Guerra Civil i el cinema’ (‘Contrasting Images: The Spanish civil war and the cinema’ (Esteve Riambau, 2011). It accompanied a major exhibition with the same title in the new headquarters of the Filmoteca in Barcelona for which the Ivens Foundation provided documents and photos. The book offers an interesting overview of the war and the films made during the conflicts from all sides, and also later ones inspired by it. For example feature films about Franco, documentaries from the anarchists, fiction made in Hollywood up to recent Spanish films reflecting on this historical period. The diversity of the subjects and angles and the meticulous research brings to life the multiple layers and complexities, that raises fundamental questions on the role of art and propaganda in society. ISBN 978-84-393-8779-4.

- Ivens later recalled the private screening at the White House. Cf. IVENS, Joris. *The camera and I*. New York: International Publishers, 1969, pp. 130-131. A recent book offering a good reconstruction of the event, using a variety of sources, is VERNON, Alex. *Hemingway's Second War. Bearing Witness to the Spanish Civil War*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011, pp. 94-96.
- Letter written by Nena Belmonte, 28/8/1937. AGA, Culture Section, File 266.
- Report n° 462, preserved at AGA, Culture Section, File 266.
- Boletín Film Popular, n° 2 (May 1938).
- Idem*.
- SHEEAN, Vincent: *Not Peace but a Sword*, Doubleday, Doran & Co, New York, 1939, pp.248-249.
- Boletín Film Popular, n° 2 (May 1938).
- ABC (Madrid, 16/8/1937).
- Although they were fighting on the same side as the Catalan nationalists, the Spanish republicans did not share all the Catalans' aspirations. For this reason, the use of a nationalist *sardana* was likely to cause offence in some quarters.
- IVENS, Joris and DESTANQUE, Robert. *Aan welke kant en in welk heelal. De geschiedenis van een leven*. Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1983, p. 162.
- I thank Esteve Riambau, Mariona Bruzzo and Rosa Saz of the Arxiu d'Audiovisuals of the Filmoteca de Catalonia for their kindness and efficiency.
- Sur (22/10/1977).
- Declarations obtained by the author in an interview with Román Gubern on 22 November 2009 in Barcelona.

opposite page:

Barcelona (La Vanguardia, 24

April 1938);

Argentina (Imparcial, 25

September 1938 and Imparcial, 5

August 1938);

Madrid (ABC, 21 May 1938);

Barcelona (La Vanguardia, 24

April 1938).

Tierra española (in Spain) and

Tierra de España (in South

America).

Joris Ivens returns to

Fuentedueña, February 1985:

Mayor, Joris Ivens, photographer,

Roman Gubern, Chema Prado

(Filmoteca de España), Catherine

Gautier. Coll. JJA/EFJl.



Magi Crusells (Ph. D.) is professor, Secretary of the Centre of Cinematic Research FILM-HISTORIA (University of Barcelona) and Managing Editor of the journal FILMHISTORIA Online. A specialist on the cinema of the Spanish Civil War, he is autor of the books *El cine en Catalunya. Una aproximación histórica* (1993), *The Beatles. Una filmografía musical* (1995), *La Guerra Civil española: cine y propaganda* (2000, 2003), *Las Brigadas Internacionales en la pantalla* (2001, 2002), *Cine y Guerra Civil española: imágenes para la memoria* (2006), *Las grandes películas del cine español* (2007), *Directores de cine en Catalunya. De la A a la Z* (2008), *100 documentales para explicar Historia. De Flaherty a Michael Moore* (2010) and *Cinéma en temps de guerra, exili i repressió* (2010). He has lectured in France, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ireland and Italy.

SHOOTING INTO THIN AIR

Documentary Films in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)¹



THE CIVIL WAR CHANGED EVERYTHING IN SPAIN, INCLUDING CINEMA. THE NATION'S FILM INDUSTRY STAGED ITS OWN INSURRECTION, AS REVOLUTIONARIES DEMANDED A POLITICAL CINEMA "THAT WOULD REVEAL THE TRUTH OF THINGS-THAT WOULD ABANDON SENTIMENTALITY, FALSEHOOD, AND ROUTINE."² ART AND REALITY WOULD JOIN FORCES IN SUCH A FILM PRACTICE, AND DOCUMENTARY SEEMED THE IDEAL FORM FOR SUCH AN ALLIANCE; INDEED, 313 OF 350 FILMS PRODUCED WITHIN SPAIN DURING THE CONFLICT WERE DOCUMENTARIES.³ YET ALTHOUGH THE PRESS INSISTED TIME AND AGAIN THAT WAR FILMS MUST BE, ABOVE ALL, "AUTHENTIC," THIS WAS NO EASY TASK.

JOSÉ CABEZA SAN DEOGRACIAS AND JULIO MONTERO DÍAZ

1. The Censorship of Documentaries

The Entertainment Commission (Junta de Espectáculos, or JE), which, beginning in March of 1937, regulated entertainment in Madrid, took it upon itself to provide "discreet censorship." Thus while the Commission prohibited the exhibition of fascist films in Madrid, it deemed Republican movies unnecessary as well:

I do not believe that the *miliciano* who risks his life every day at the front, and who is permitted a few free hours each week in Madrid, should have to spend that time watching war films that are little more than propaganda aimed at foreigners or people from other towns in Spain. He sees too much danger and death from too close a distance for us to sour his free time with films like this.⁴

Carreño, president of the JE, recognized that propaganda films—largely documentaries—were boring, and a CNT representative noted that after living the horror of the war, the *miliciano* was not going to pay to re-live it.⁵ Such officials seemed to be searching for a censoring mechanism that would somehow let purely entertaining films pass while detaining those that might "injure the revolutionary moment,"⁶ but such a means was never developed. The approach of Nationalist troops in November 1936 seems momentarily to have closed almost all movie theaters in the city.⁷ But at this point the syndicates stepped in, and "from

November 18th they fully controlled and exploited the local theaters of Madrid."⁸ Documentary had its brief moment of glory at the marquee; in the four weeks between November 24th and December 15th, 1936, when an average of 7.5 cinemas were screening films, billboards changed little, indicating that theaters were showing only Soviet fiction films—*The Sailors of Cronstadt* and *Chapaiev*, the *Red Warrior*—and documentaries or newsreels such as *¡Pasaremos!* or *Noche buena del miliciano*.

Billboards published in Madrid during these weeks thus seemed to mark a period when audiences were fed only Soviet and documentary film—nearly a month of cinema exclusively *about* and *for* the war effort—and it was not until December 22nd, during the Christmas holidays, that these billboards reflected a return of Hollywood movies. But occasional advertisements for films like *Prisoner Number 13*, *The Courage of Charlie Chan*, and *Morena Clara* in newspapers such as *Claridad*, *CNT* and *Mundo Obrero* suggest otherwise, revealing that despite political efforts to create an image of a Madrid that thought only of the war (hence the selective publication of movie listings), pure entertainment films were never completely absent from the theaters.

2. Production of the Real: A Cinema of Necessity

Neither programmers nor the public wanted ideological documentaries. But the period imposed particular demands that ignored the commercial film market and led

to a surge of short films and a cinema of necessity.⁹ Spain had to show the world that it had generated a new kind of film; it had to leave behind the tired stories, told a thousand times, and use cinema instead to explore and "get to the marvellous essence of what is now happening in Spain."¹⁰ Fernando G. Mantilla believed that such shorts were the most ambitious of movies—the richest in content, the most elevated as films. Documentaries "succeeded where feature films failed, filling the screen's blank universe with elements of the soul of Spain—a country almost unknown, marvellous and exceptional in every way."¹¹ But Mantilla's enthusiasm was shared neither by the public nor by representatives of the film market,¹² and critics also took a harsh view of the kind of film he championed.¹³ With the exception of *Guadalquivir* (shown just once, among a group of Cifesa films),¹⁴ these documentaries were not commercially distributed. Although enthusiasm was high for documentary production, the films themselves—most of them horrible—would have put movie theatres out of business; these representative criticisms characterize the poor state of the war documentary.¹⁵

Those making documentaries wanted to bring the battlefield to life on screen; they wanted audiences to feel, hear, and suffer the fighting from their seats. Simply hearing or reading about the war was not enough; the public needed to verify a battle's reality "through the succession of images that, without the possibility of artifice, captured the vibrations of a unique moment."¹⁶ The camera, in other words, must transport the war to the screen and stir the spectator. Indeed, documentary should be an "extension of the war itself, since it too was a weapon of defense and attack available for deployment against the enemy."¹⁷ Yet achieving verisimilitude was not easy, and these filmmakers' attempts failed; the war they presented on screen did not seem like an actual war.¹⁸

Combat scenes tended to be especially poor. Upon seeing Roman Karmen's footage, Luis Buñuel declared most of the battle scenes "very bad. In fact, you couldn't see anything. The bombings—yes. Those are very photogenic."¹⁹ Combat, after all, involved action, movement, struggle, but most documentaries failed to capture that dynamism. Cameramen filmed mostly static events—parades, homages—or featured militiamen writing letters, washing their clothes, or taking their turn in the familiar ritual of piling up the rows of sandbags that served as barricades: "although the filmmaker swears time and again that this footage was shot with the enemy nearby, the spectator, mindful of the cinema's array of visual tricks, remains distrustful."²⁰ Indeed, these war documentaries, monotonous and lack imagination, have little cinematic value. Their presentation of the conflict failed to satisfy the expectations of a genre, the war documentary, whose objectivity was the source of the drama that would genuinely convince viewers. Despite much talk of innovation and realism, the films offered only "a repetition of the same old thing."²¹ To record the fighting in a way that would satisfy critics' demands and the public's expectations, cameramen would have to involve themselves in battle, but few had the audacity during filming²² to capture "moments of war."²³

"Documentary" was a term many applied without discrimination: "without explaining to us why, they flaunt documentary's bombastic qualifier."²⁴ The plague of poor documentaries exasperated critics who perceived the use of syndicate acronyms in public advertisements as a distortion. While such advertisements promised reality and drama, the documentaries themselves offered only standard shots that lacked emotion.²⁵

España 1936 (Jean-Paul Le Chanois, 1937) was one of the few

documentaries that received unanimous critical acclaim. *Mundo Obrero*, *Castilla Libre* and *El Sol* all praised its primary accomplishment—to show what the war was like. The film used montage to recreate the war's fronts; it provided the kind of "facts" that the press demanded and that conferred a sense of truth. In *España 1936*, the off-screen narrator's voice disappears during the battle scenes; the rhythms of the montage and the sound track are enough to drive the action. The bombing sequence, which lasts barely five minutes, fulfills perfectly the critics' dreams of a film in which the war's images speak for themselves, *objectively*. "*España 1936* is a sincere documentary that shows us war as it is: full of horror and heroism," applauded one critic. Indeed, the bombing sequence requires no voice-over, for the succession of images itself narrates a short history of the war. Planes appear in the sky and drop their bombs, the bombs explosions, people run for shelter, the bomb's effects are evident in the trail of dead bodies they leave, a woman sobs, the city stands in ruins, and, finally, the sequence concludes with a shot of a coffin-filled room.

Although an exceptional film, *España 1936* appeared only twice in *Abc*'s movie announcements. The public considered it as mediocre and uninteresting as the other war documentaries. Documentary's bad reputation affected everyone. Part of the blame lay with the cameramen: filming the war from the comfort of the rearguard established a generic precedent. In *A través de la metralla*, Armand Guerra described the two most common types of cameramen. First, there was the intrepid one, indifferent to danger, who sought out the best angle from which to shoot, even if it meant putting himself in the epicentre of the battle.²⁶ He was a soldier himself, armed with a camera. The other kind of cameraman, far more common, excused himself from the action:

Documentaries that portray the fight appear on the screen only once in a while. And when they do, it is to present us something false, without the grand emotion of a real document. Our cameras seem to be afraid to descend into the trenches, and they seem content to capture the latest parade or the most ostentatious celebration. In other words, the same things they captured for the newsreels before the war.²⁷

Cameramen tended to film easy scenes that presented no danger, even if such scenes were far from the heart of the battle and were not the most representative of the war. In the end, no matter how much the press pushed, the front was a bad place to make movies, even for Buñuel.²⁸

3. The Amateurs and Documentary Cinema

Mantilla saw in documentary the chance to experiment, the opportunity to practice and learn the "great cinema" of the future, although he would have to use scarce resources wisely; "if one examines one's conscience honestly," he said, "one is incapable of wasting material."²⁹ Mantilla's warning went unheeded.

The war cameraman emerged from nowhere and thrust himself into the streets with whatever weapons he could get. Like locusts, rank amateurs flocked to the industry, believing its technology was accessible to anyone. But good faith did not necessarily translate into good cinema.³⁰ Lacking the necessary knowledge to embark on ambitious projects, these amateurs did not hesitate to make primitive movies: they picked up cameras, loaded film, and recorded reality, becoming the absent eye of many republicans...a kind of Vertov. When they finished recording, they developed the film, spliced the scenes together, and projected the



Joris Ivens and Ernest Hemingway in Hollywood, June 1937. Coll. JIA/EEJ

The Film Poster
Tierra Espana

result. It was the quickest way of making art.³¹ In July 1936, there was a significant supply of virgin film stock in Madrid's studios, but the war changed film's destiny as such stock, originally intended for features, instead became an avalanche of shorts. This was a time of compulsive and compartmentalized production. Many films were begun, but few were finished.³² Anyone who could get his hands on a camera called himself a cameraman and—in the best of cases—learned what the work entailed by wasting miles of film.³³

These amateurs tended to make short documentaries; such films were easy. Newsreels required diverse settings and stories, but they were also time-sensitive, they had to follow a clear chronology, and they had to be well-organized. Such films made numerous practical demands: the coordination of a crew, the transport of canisters, a lab, distribution. The scarcity of resources limited the newsreel's possibilities; only *España al día* managed to establish itself. Many others simply failed, after using up whatever resources were available.

The short documentary established itself as a genre. It was permitted to include things “as absurd as they were inexplicable”³⁴ of the first six months of the war. Its creators came from a new generation, “untrained in filmmaking but excessively able, on the other hand, of recklessness.”³⁵ In September 1936, the Syndicate of Public Spectacles of the CNT acknowledged the problem, and promised to improve the situation: its members would foster a cinema that would make Spain recognize them as artists. They would shoot a documentary series, *España en camino*, that would vindicate them. Months of futile excitement followed: footage was shot, but no films were produced. Even the newspaper *Claridad* apologized,³⁶ and Armand Guerra despaired:

I cannot, nor should I, allow myself to be treated as a kind of Cinderella by the new members of our organization, who have erected a kind of tribunal or command control that intends to remove from the heart of the work not Armand Guerra, experienced filmmaker, but comrade Armand Guerra, who does not know how to flatter and who does not need favoritism to complete his useful labor for the organization.³⁷

Good will was not the only thing in abundance.³⁸ The press wondered, “Why these interminable parades of our popular army?”³⁹ The parades were filmed in the relative comfort of the rearguard, where there was only a war of ceremonies. It was a refuge where one might reside without being terribly disturbed.

4. The Anarchists:

The Odyssey of Documentary Production

Anarchist syndicates produced three kinds of films: those that educated, those that entertained, and movies that did some of both. Documentary was the form best suited to translating into images the practices of the classroom; scenes and characters could serve as teachers. Documentaries also fulfilled the function of familiarizing the public with its new world. It was difficult to know where the utopian visions began—with the value placed on education, or with the lack of knowledge about cinema.⁴⁰

The anarchists never imagined that filmmaking would be so complicated. Making a single documentary was nothing less than a heroic act under those difficult circumstances of chaos, scarcity, selfishness, and petty jealousy. Armand Guerra⁴¹ put himself at the disposition of the CNT when the war broke out, and he and his crew received various commissions. But his account of the situation's vicissitudes ap-

pears almost fictional⁴² in contrast to his correspondence from the period. The syndicate also commissioned *Gestas proletarias*, which would become *Estampas guerreras*. That project, according to Guerra, was “madness”:

You could already see the chaos into which the Filmmakers Syndicate had fallen, and how petty jealousies and personal enmity were working against me. They were able to prevent me from making the important film *Gestas libertarias*. Would they now also be able to stop me from making *Durruti*, for whose script I had been supplied with all our great red warrior's papers?⁴³

The need for negative stock worsened. If cameramen shot the taking of the Chinchilla prison, there wouldn't be enough film to shoot the attacks on Albarracín and Teruel. In the end, they wouldn't be able to film in Teruel anyway⁴⁴. Guerra suspected he was being boycotted. He threatened to go to Russia or France to make his film about the great anarchist hero “if they keep obstructing my work.... It is very painful for me to say that, but I have my reasons.”⁴⁵ *Durruti* was never made. Guerra had to beg for materials—and the Committee's trust.

The *Estampas guerreras* project was begun with the financial support of the CNT's Central Regional Committee. Castiello declared: “it is you we wish to sponsor this extremely important work,”⁴⁶ and he recommended the creation of a “Film and Theater Propaganda” group within the committee's Propaganda Section. There were disputes over resources: many filmmakers and few means. Upstart cineastes impeded the war effort, clamoring to persuade their superiors of the advantages of their marvellous projects.⁴⁷ They were, in effect, mercenaries: they did not work out of loyalty to any ideals, but sought instead to take advantage of the Anarchists' trust and take thousands of their pesetas. These “film leeches” didn't bother to actually work—like Guerra and Castiello—for the standard ten peseta salary. They began to pay themselves “ministers' salaries”⁴⁸. The problem of inadequate training, real or not, tended to devalue competence, so that the committee would not divide or divert its support to others. But, after *Estampas guerreras*, there were no more resources. According to Castiello, “individuals with socially repugnant pasts” had prevailed.⁴⁹

5. The Betrayal of the People

Film was, in theory, the best medium of propaganda: it could reach more people and utilize the image's dramatic resources to persuade.⁵⁰ But it could also be a lucrative form of propaganda. Pamphlets and political meetings only paid in persuasion, and thus were a lost investment. Film, on the other hand, could finance other types of propaganda. This is what led to the lax attitudes towards cinema that allowed films to be shown because they were popular, even if their poor content should have prevented them from being exhibited.

Earnings at the box office depended on the popularity of the film. The public paid to see a particular film, not to support a particular political group. A movie theatre could be ruined by poor selection of films.⁵¹ To make film into lucrative propaganda involved commercial risks. In one propaganda effort in Chicago, the CNT selected poorly. They exhibited a film that included parts of documentaries such as *Madrid*, *Tomb of Fascism* and others produced by the Syndicate of Public Spectacles in Barcelona.⁵² They envisioned presenting a film to an “uninitiated public” and rented a theater in Chicago to screen the film for a week. They spent \$2,200 for the theater and for publicity. They put up \$600 of this from money “earmarked for Spain,” and a friend

loaned them the rest, “confident that the film would have great success and not only pay the advance commission but leave enough to send a healthy sum to the CNT.”⁵³ The week passed, the film screened, and “we found ourselves with a deficit of \$1500. The only consolation was that of the fifteen hundred speculators, fourteen hundred were sympathetic to the Anarchist cause and had never heard of the CNT-FAI. In the end, the experience resulted in expensive propaganda, but propaganda nonetheless.”⁵⁴

Something similar occurred in Madrid. *Dawn of Hope* reflected the Anarchist ideology better than *Slums* or *Our Culprit*, but it was not as entertaining and the public did not turn out to see it. The cinemas in Madrid that were controlled by the Anarchists could not permit a failure like the one in Chicago to last more than a few weeks. Expensive propaganda was simply an unaffordable luxury. When the Local Council of SIA of Figueras lamented the failure of its festival due to the poor quality of the films, the National Council told them to choose a better program of movies, because the distribution house had “no interest in having the viewing public leave the theater unsatisfied with the SIA screenings.”⁵⁵ During the civil war, the Anarchists confronted the dilemma of making films that the public did not want to see. Many propaganda films were produced, while few entertaining, Hollywood-style movies were made. Curiously—or perhaps not—it was the Hollywood-style movies that drew the largest audiences at the box office. The movies that supposedly dealt with the war, the short films that had to excite people in order to persuade them, did not reach the masses, or at least reached them less often. Even in the Soviet Union, these films were considered useless, and not for ideological reasons:

Currently they have been sending newsreels, and they usually they include one of the short propaganda films produced by the SIE. But you know what has happened? The USSR will not show it, citing the deficient quality of such propaganda films and noting that they cannot count on them to draw audiences.⁵⁶

The Communists experienced a similar problem. The Workers' Cinema Cooperative (COC) was the first Communist producer⁵⁷ of a new style of film. This was not a group of upstarts; it included cinema workers and technicians⁵⁸ who knew filmmaking and wanted to reach a public that up until that point had *suffered* a cinema made mediocre by “people on the Right, who had no other interest in film than to make money.”⁵⁹ The Communists wanted to “reconstruct the Spanish film industry”: bourgeois cinema had to be abandoned to history. In a note, the COC protested the use of film for any reason other than providing propaganda for the Republican cause:

This affirmation, which may appear unnecessary, is important if we are to judge by the facts. Theaters continue to project bourgeois films. And this is the equivalent of scorning a propaganda of incalculable value, a powerful tool like antifascist cinema, and at a time when every act and every medium of expression and persuasion should be harnessed to generate the kind of enthusiasm and discipline that will bring us victory.⁶⁰

Madrid's movie screens could not depend on individual initiatives, “regardless of how well-intentioned they might be,” and they had to subjugate their own interests to the general good—to winning the war. The unity and discipline also affected the film industry. The efforts of the COC were concentrated in making sure that “Spanish movie screens

remained free of films that had no life or social content, made by the bourgeois for the bourgeois.”⁶¹ They attempted to succeed in this endeavor by screening Soviet films and their own documentaries as a precursor to a broader production project that would be “revolutionarily vertical in two ways—artistic and social.” Such films would encourage “restlessness, beauty and profundity—in short, spirit.”⁶²

During its brief existence, the COC struggled with a lack of direction: among the film workers there were abundant foot soldiers but few generals to direct the operations. Only Antonio Del Amo and Fernando G. Mantilla were on the payroll as directors, even though there were “grand projects” to train qualified directors:

There are no film directors, just as there was barely any Spanish cinema. We need to train them. And we are willing to give material resources to the young men we consider suited to this task. We will begin by bringing a good Soviet director and cameraman who, while they are here to produce four films for us, will teach this select group of young men to be our future directors.⁶³

There were studios, specialized employees and even a bureaucratic infrastructure with an “American film” office on the Calle Álcala. But something essential was missing: American *know how*. The COC neither knew how to make films, nor did they have confidence in their leaders: they imported knowledge from the USSR in order to improvise a film school. Even so, the COC produced some films, like *¡Pasaremos!*, which was screened on seven occasions in commercial theaters, *Solidarity*, which appeared on billboards four times, and *July 1936*, which was shown six times. None of these survived the disappearance of the COC. No funds were passed on, not even to the COC's natural heir, Film Popular. When the COC vanished in January or February of 1937, not one of its films ever reappeared on billboards.

In January of 1937, the COC wanted to edit a weekly newsreel, a project that would take shape later under the control of Film Popular. The COC also wanted to produce four films whose scripts had been entrusted to “various solvent antifascist intellectuals.”⁶⁴ They did not prosper. Film Popular adopted the COC's theoretical bases to produce and distribute a cinema conceived as a weapon of propaganda.

Film Popular had to contend with the problem of a dismantled film industry. From the three centers with production equipment—Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia—not a single narrative feature film was made, but plenty of short films were produced to raise morale, which was the essential purpose of the company. In five months, it produced “documentaries and short films”: *New Era in the Countryside*, *The People's Army is Born*, *Court of the Rivers*, *Galicia*, *Youth on the March*, *Congress of Antifascist Intellectuals*, *Sun in the Night*, and *Heroic Cavalry*.⁶⁵ These films were barely seen in Madrid: only *Galicia* made three appearances.

Movie theaters did not want documentaries. Economically, to risk screening a documentary was dangerous. From February to June of 1937, the earnings of documentaries were disastrously low: they brought in 8,968.37 pesetas while costing 6,260—a gross profit of merely 2,708.37 pesetas.

6. The Spanish Earth: The Limits of Being a Documentary

The Spanish Earth (Joris Ivens, 1937) was a documentary of condemnation. It set out to inform the outside world about what was happening in Madrid. It narrates the city's suffering so as to make it an international tragedy, a symbol that would provoke people's consciences. The film's images spoke to the people of Madrid of their struggle:

‘The Spanish Earth’, apart from its cinematic values—continuity, rhythm, plasticity and human interpretation of its theme—possesses great political and social importance. Its images speak to us eloquently, vibrantly, dramatically, of all that is important in our struggle: the defense of a government that the people freely elected; the love of the earth, which we want to make even more fecund; the indomitable spirit that will not bow to any foreign attempt to conquer. And on top of all of this, the inhuman, bloody and brutal actions of totalitarian states: women and children battered by shrapnel; houses ruined; works of art destroyed and the Spanish earth slowly drenched with the blood of its children in the most unjust, cruel war that civilized countries have ever known.⁶⁶

The documentary revealed the truth to both the leaders and citizens of the United States. The film’s publicity suggests that it was shown in 1,900 American theaters. But this was a lie: in fact it played at roughly three hundred commercial theaters. The film’s distribution was largely among groups already convinced of its message, or to people who were not going to the movies for entertainment—in marginal theaters run by syndicates, associations, civic centers, etc.⁶⁷ The *Film Popular Bulletin* collected various declarations made by President Roosevelt to the United Press: in them he congratulates Ernest Hemingway for describing to the world what was happening in Spain and he then asks: “Why haven’t you told me before the truth about what’s happening in Spain?”⁶⁸ According to its own publicity, *The Spanish Earth* had awakened the American conscience, which had been lulled to sleep by nationalist propaganda:⁶⁹ now Americans knew who were the democrats, and who were the fascists. The film’s influence was greatly exaggerated. But this made sense. In August of 1937, *Variety* noted the double effect that resulted from any document of the Spanish Civil War in the U.S.: enthusiasm on both sides. Following the accurate and dispassionate account in *The Spanish Earth*, *Variety* said: “It is dispassionate, powerful and at times informative, but it is also vengeful, bitter and irrational.”⁷⁰

The Spanish Earth was not a typical documentary: certain dramatizations embellished reality. But the important thing was that the film *resembled* a documentary⁷¹ that offered an appropriately serious vision of the war, a film that did not trivialize the conflict. It sought to fulfill “its mission of condemnation from the screens of Europe and America, so that the world will directly perceive all the horror and all the grandeur of our fight.”⁷²

Hemingway signaled that the film was intended for audiences outside of Spain. He confessed that he would not see nor write about *The Spanish Earth*: he had already lived the Spanish Civil War. He did not need to see its recreation on movie screens. But for those who had not been witness to the war, the film would show them the truth: “if you weren’t there I think you ought to see it,” he said.⁷³

For being a documentary, *The Spanish Earth* was well received at the box office in Madrid. But this does not mean that the film was a success. Almost 90% of the films produced by the Republic during the civil war were documentaries.⁷⁴ Yet they only represented 4.2% of what was shown on the capital’s movie screens. *The Spanish Earth* was shown for six weeks between July and October of 1938.⁷⁵ This is not a very impressive number of showings for one of the classic documentaries of the Spanish Civil War. The film’s problem was that it was a documentary. The action scenes, including some good shots of bombings, still did not make *The Spanish Earth* a fiction film like those Hollywood delivered.⁷⁶ And it wasn’t entertaining. Once again, the box office cast

the all important vote—the public was responsible for judging the films:

Why show *The Spanish Earth*? Do we have time to screen *The Spanish Earth*? I hope that Pedro Puche will forgive me—but even if he doesn’t—*The Spanish Earth* is the most boring film that the civil war has given us. It has two moments—the bombing of the Gran Vía and the battle of Jarama—that could be considered compelling “meteur en scene” if Joris Ivens wasn’t already seen as a saint among the elite who frequent the Cine-Clubs.... *The Spanish Earth* premiered a month ago. It premiered badly, in a run-down theater, with little publicity, without the audience being told beforehand what it was going to see. With all of this against it, Joris Ivens’ film was not an easy sell. Possibly the strict consideration of commercial gain—even?—is what weighs heavily today on the enthusiasm of local agencies, reluctant also to show Soviet films on the pretext that the people—what people?—prefer movies dusted with “sex appeal.” In any case, one could say to the defenders of *Tarzan* that for good reasons—at least for good antifascist reasons—the projection of *The Spanish Earth* should be required today in all of Madrid’s theaters....⁷⁷

From *The Spanish Earth*, *Tarzan*’s fans wanted more adventure, more intrigue, and certainly more Hollywood style. They were already familiar with the reality of the war, like Hemingway. In the mind of *Mundo Obrero*’s film critic, the absence of advance notice of what was going to be screened harmed the reception of the film. No one told the public, “This is an antifascist documentary and not an entertaining story where Gary Cooper’s hair remains in place while they’re dropping bombs on him.” Without advertisements or preparation, the public entered theaters expecting to see a fiction film, and instead it was presented with a documentary. The result: dashed expectations, and a disillusioned public. The six screenings of *The Spanish Earth* revealed the public’s lack of passion for the documentary and stood in sharp contrast with the twenty-week run enjoyed by Florián Rey’s *Morena Clara*, the thirty-nine week run by Juan Gremillon’s *¡Centinela, alerta!*, the twenty-four week run by Sam Wood’s *A Night at the Opera*, or the twenty week run by Fitzmaurice’s *Suzy*.

The Spanish Earth is a propaganda documentary that in certain moments employs fictional techniques. Apart from the editing of the most intensely dramatic scenes, such as the bombing scene, what stands out is the dramatization of the young soldier who returns to his home. The film creates anticipation using the device of a letter from the soldier at the front to his family; this prepares the audience for the emotional arrival of this militiaman at his home several scenes later. Another fictional technique involves the invented declarations that Hemingway uses to suggest the thoughts of the Madrileños in one of the city’s forced evacuations:

NARRATOR-HEMINGWAY (VOICE OVER)

Where are we going? Where will we live? Where can we make a living?

An old woman appears in close up.

NARRATOR-HEMINGWAY (VOICE OVER)

I won’t go. I’m too old.

The lyrical coalesces with the propagandistic. The documentary begins by presenting the Spanish earth, which is now dry and hard because the water is needed by the defenders of Madrid. Water is a metaphor for all that has to

be sacrificed for the war. The film concludes with a scene in which a barren field is again irrigated with water: this vital liquid returns to nourish the earth and make it fertile. This image represents the hope of a return to normal life thanks to the heroism of the Spanish people, the hope that the battle Ivens is filming might be a prelude to a favorable outcome in the war for the Republicans. Then the water will again flow over the parched earth. Ivens insisted from the beginning that *The Spanish Earth* was not a fiction film, but an attempt to document a war. Precisely when the first battle scene appears, the film’s essentially documentary nature is reinforced by a phrase delivered in voice over:

NARRATOR-HEMINGWAY (VOICE OVER)

Men cannot act in front of the camera in the presence of death.

What is presented is reality, not something falsely natural or performed. The propagandistic message of the film is delivered both by what is said, and by what is not said. The Republicans are presented as those who will safeguard the nation’s culture and will preserve “the treasures of Spanish art” from the war’s destruction; the film depicts several soldiers cataloging and storing art from the churches. The Republic also takes care of Catholic art, the film suggests, and Hemingway emphasizes this fact. The documentary presents the Spanish Civil War as a battle between David and Goliath. The Republicans are like David—normal, average men who have been compelled to become soldiers and exchange their tools of labor for weapons of war. Following a bombing raid, Hemingway wonders why the Madrileños stay, why they don’t abandon their city:

NARRATOR-HEMINGWAY (VOICE OVER)

Why do they stay? They stay because this is their city, their home. They work here. This is their fight, the fight to be able to live like human beings.

David is surrounded by death, but it doesn’t paralyze him. The spirited music conveys the feeling of forward movement, despite the dead who remain behind. And the Republicans appear very organized: Azaña gives speeches, houses are rebuilt, bread is baked, the volunteer army trains, etc. There is a unity of action geared toward victory. Ahead stands Goliath, a professional army fighting to destroy the people:

NARRATOR-HEMINGWAY (VOICE OVER)

These are professional soldiers fighting against a people in arms. They are trying to impose their military authority on the will of the people....

Moreover, Goliath is receiving help from foreign powers. The documentary proves the presence of Germany and Italy in the war by including footage of a downed German aircraft or letters written by Italian soldiers who are now dead: “These dead come from other countries.” There is no mention of the International Brigades. The foreign assistance being provided to Franco, the film implies, is the reason why the war is still being fought:

NARRATOR-HEMINGWAY (VOICE OVER)

Without the constant support of Italy and Germany, the Spanish revolt would have lasted six weeks.

The documentary deploys a motif of war sounds—bombs exploding, machine-guns firing—and the ubiquitous pres-

ence of death to give its events dramatic force. The films ends with a battle won by the Republicans, and the lyrical optimism resumes: the fight of the Republican people will lead to victory.⁷⁸

7. Conclusion

Because it did not succeed with the public, the ideological documentary film of the Spanish Civil War failed as well as an effective means of persuasion. Marcel Oms claims that the best documentary films of the war were those that employed a greater degree of dramatic reenactment. Fiction improved reality, making the war flashier, more cinematic. The power of the images depended in part on the manner in which they conveyed reality. Frank Capra, director of the *Why We Fight* series, in contrast to those who proclaimed that a film was defined by its adherence to artistic norms,⁷⁹ considered entertainment to be cinema’s essential function. In 1937, Mamoulian thought the same.⁸⁰ In the Spanish Civil War, cinema entertained its audiences with fiction films—the only kind of movie that the public was willing to pay to see. The 5,612 lists in the Database of Films Projected in Madrid During the Spanish Civil War reveal what kind of films were shown in the commercial theaters in Madrid: 94% of the movies advertised were fiction—shorts or features; 4% were documentaries; and 1.3% were newsreels. This does not mean that documentaries and newsreels were not screened assiduously. Perhaps such films were not advertised because they weren’t publicity draws, and the public simply assumed that they would be projected along with the main features. In any case, fiction proved to be a more effective mode of cinema, first because fiction films were more heavily advertised,⁸¹ and second, because they reached more people.⁸² The rule of the period seemed to be that fiction films with political objectives were the most effective kind of cinema. Yet during the civil war, this rule appeared to go unheeded, or perhaps it was simply impossible to follow. Though documentary was the mode of choice—one kind of cinema that took the place of another—neither the public nor the critics embraced it. But neither can those who produced films during the war be held responsible for documentary’s failure: they did not choose, documentary’s scarcity chose for them.

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'Diary' of David Perlov

DESIRE AND FICTION IN DAVID PERLOV'S IMAGE OF JORIS IVENS

THE VERY FIRST TIME IN WHICH THE VISUAL IMAGE OF JORIS IVENS WAS SHOWN IN ISRAELI'S CINEMA, WAS BY MEANS AND THROUGH THE EYES OF DAVID PERLOV'S DOCUMENTARY *DIARY* (1982). DAVID PERLOV IS THE FOREFATHER OF CONTEMPORARY ISRAELI DOCUMENTARY CINEMA. HE TAKES A RARE VISUAL IMAGE OF JORIS IVENS AS PART OF HIS *MAGNUM OPUS DIARY*. THIS ARTICLE OFFERS A CLOSE SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THIS SINGULAR AND UNIQUE CINEMATIC MOMENT. THROUGH CLOSE READING OF THE TEXT AND IMAGE OF THIS SEQUENCE I PROPOSE TO RELOCATE THE INVISIBLE RATHER THEN THE VISIBLE AS A SUBSTANTIAL EPISTEMIC CATEGORY OF THE DOCUMENTARY PRAXIS.¹ THIS KIND OF PROPOSITION IS SUPPORTED HERE, IN THE LAST PART OF THE ARTICLE BY AN ABBREVIATED TREATMENT OF THE LAST SELF-VISUAL IMAGE OF JORIS IVENS, WHICH WAS MADE VISIBLE IN IVENS' AND LORIDAN-IVENS'S LAST FILM AND CHASE OF THE INVISIBLE WIND: *UNE HISTOIRE DE VENT* (1989).

The image of Joris Ivens in *Diary*

The visual image of Joris Ivens appears in *Diary* in the third and middle chapter of *Diary*. This chapter, forming the centre-axis of Perlov's six hours Magnum Opus, became, for the next generations of Israeli documentarians 'The' Canonical piece of Israeli contemporary documentary cinema. Perlov's *Diary* is not only a breaking-through documentary in the sense of its contents, by means of closely following and describing the psychological and epistemic subjectivity of the filmmaker during the critical decennium in Israel's daily life as from the Yom-Kippur War (1973) up to the First Lebanon War (1982), but, and moreover by defining a new aesthetics and ethics to Israeli documentary cinema. Perlov is avidly and convincingly introducing the position of the totally subjective and individualistic narrator and screen protagonist, who's very observation-reading-interpretation of reality, as such, bears ultimate legitimacy - a status which breaks off with a half-century lasting of official Zionist voice, and by thus paving the road to the new emerging voice of the upcoming Israeli documentary discourse of the 90's and early 2000'. This Israeli documentary movement received an amazing successful international acclaim, winning many awards at festivals, through new and extremely varied ways of expression. Contrary to Perlov who, in *Diary* is explicitly exposing his visual and sonic image and heavily relies on its apparent signifier's semiotic presence, the one and only time in which Ivens, in the course of his professional career, crafted himself as a self-visual image as part of his filmic texts, was in his first professional film: *De Brug* (*The Bridge*, 1928). So, from the factual perspective of cinema history (of almost a century), it should be stated that all of Ivens' films, who is undoubtedly acknowledged as one of the major forefathers of the documentary tradition of the 20th century, are characterized by an absolute exclusion and nihilism of the apparent self-visual image of the documentarian-Ivens.

Memory and confrontation

Perlov, who cooperated with Ivens as an assistant editor, in the film project on the painter Mark Chagall (*Marc Chagall*, 1958-1962), has never forgotten Ivens. They met in 1958 when Perlov studied in Paris and Henri Langlois, the director of the Cinémathèque française, was trying for many years to realize a biographical film portrait of Chagall. Finally he invited Ivens to finish the job by the editing all the footage, consisting only of film images of Chagall's paintings. Probably because the Russian-Jewish painter Chagall, by then, already was one of Perlov's favorite artists, Langlois, a friend of Perlov too, asked him to become the assistant of Ivens.² How could one forget Ivens after this personal collaboration? Ivens, a cinematic legend already in his own lifetime. The two Ivens' lyrical and classical Avant-garde films: *De Brug* (*The Bridge*) and *Regen* (*Rain*, 1929) (to which Pudovkin and Eisenstein got breathless at their sight) were as Perlov testified, one of the driving cinematic sources of inspiration for his filmic consciousness. Twenty years later Perlov returns to Paris to meet his maestro. Where and how should we approach and create the gateway to the unique filmic moment of Perlov's filming of Ivens?

An image-by-image analysis of Ivens' image in *Diary*

In the scene preceding to the one in which Perlov arrives at Ivens' Parisian house, Perlov is roaming Paris streets and is confronted with traces and signs of two violent and non-natural cases of death. The suicide of his old friend Abrasha who decided to jump to his death from the seven's floor balcony on the 'Grand hotel de l'avenir' and the murder of Pier Goldman, a Jewish freedom fighter who was murdered next to Ivens' house by a nationalistic racist group. Perlov describes his friend Abrasha: 'Abrasha was a man of genius, of passion, of an obsessive sense of right and wrong'. For a moment it seems like Perlov is describing Ivens. In a very subtle Perlovian way indeed he is foreshadowing Ivens' entrance into his private filmic diary. Perlov's cinematic Paris, as in the third chapter of *Diary* is not only filled with bloodshed and doomed memories, but is presented, till that chronological moment in the well-known cinematic convention of 'color'. The sound track furnishes a lyric by Hanns Eisler - not just 'another one' - one out of the many unforgotten compositions by the legendary composer, but the one taken from the constitutive Ivens film: *Nieuwe Gronden* (*New Earth*, 1933). And then 'A Cut' occurs in the visual plain of the text. Not just 'another' cut, but 'A Cut' which demands scrutiny.

A Semantically rich CUT

The 'other' Paris of Perlov, who embodies himself both as a camera narrator and a protagonist-immersed in memories which thrust his cognisant quest for Ivens, is resurrected in black- and- white. Perlov 'loads' the cut with a sophisticated rhetoric trap and will plea by way of pretentious linguistic innocence, (concealing a complicated semantic implication, being far beyond the absorption capability of the innocent implied first time viewer): 'Suddenly I find myself shooting in Black and White as if to sustain a forgotten melody'. Upon first listening, it seems as if the description of the daily labour of the documentarian: the one being 'naturally' caught up in the coincidental work of 'naïve and unbiased capturing of daily sights' - the one who is no other than an ordinary modern craftsman who by arbitrary force of nature exchanges raw materials in the camera, that would provide with the conditions to untangle this seemingly banal real-life cinematic moment, as it has actually unfolded in the 'reality' of the historic world. But mechani-

DAN GEVA



left page:
Marion Michell, Joris Ivens in
Paris, 1982. © EFJL

Article about David Perlov, *Le Monde*, March 2007