

## Mother Russia by Edith Vitali

### Bad times for Rasputin

*Soviet films are put at the service of the war mobilization by the KGB—but top partycrats won't suffer.*

Last summer, coinciding with the disappearance of then-party chief Andropov, the first rumors were heard to the effect that a new cold wind was blowing in Soviet culture. After the downing of the Korean airliner on Sept. 1, an intense pre-war mobilization started, including the indoctrination of the population to be prepared for a U.S. nuclear attack any minute. Oleg Bitov, an editor of the influential *Literary Gazette*, defected to the West in late September, because of the "re-Stalinization" of cultural life. Purges in the theater and literary establishment followed.

On May 6 the Soviet communist party paper *Pravda* published a Central Committee resolution, in which the movie makers of the country were harshly criticized. Some film directors, the resolution said, dedicate their films to "uninteresting, unimportant problems, which are far from the pressing problems of life, from the questions which especially move the Soviet people." Other films treat "fictitious conflicts, petty cares, joyless descriptions of everyday life," or "idealize outdated codes of morality and lifestyles." What is above all missing in the films is "the attractive power of positive heroes."

Two weeks later, the film producers of the Soviet Union got together in Moscow's October Hall, under the supervision of former Azerbaijani KGB chief and present member of the Politburo Gaidar Aliyev, along with the current Central Committee secretary

in charge of the media as a whole, Mikhail Zimyanin, who served in the past under the infamous secret police chief Beria.

Thus well protected, the chairman of the government film committee, "Goskino," F. T. Ermashch expressed his "warm thanks" to Konstantin Chernenko and repeated word for word the reproaches contained in the Central Committee resolution. "Progress in the art of film depends directly upon to what extent it represents our social ideals, which find expression in the form of positive heroes of our day, in an active and artistically convincing way," Ermashch announced. The "new traits of the present-day heroes," he underlined, must be "clearly and convincingly" reflected on the screen.

He complained that only a few movies deal with the "creative activity of the party and its leading role." Films are needed which treat "patriotic war and international themes," and in which "the reactionary, peace-hating character of imperialism" will be exposed. "We are peaceful people," Ermashch emphasized, "but the complex international situation, which is coming more and more dangerously to a head every day due to the aggressive behavior of imperialism, demands of those Soviet people the highest political watchfulness and firm decisiveness, in order to defend the achievements of socialism."

These were words perfectly to the taste of Gaidar Aliyev, who was the last to hold forth on the subject. He

stressed once again the growing importance of "political propaganda," since "the international situation has become extremely aggravated, above all because of American imperialism."

Everybody held his breath when Aliyev mentioned "some young movie directors who are socially passive and afraid of a mature intervention into life, who avoid the hot issues of our time, shrinking back into local or chamber subjects or making films for the sake of filming." But no names were mentioned, and the question remains whether Nikolai Mikhalkov ("Oblomov," "Sibiriade"), a representative of the new generation of filmmakers, has fallen from grace or not.

The KGB has just whipped together a quickie competition, in order to get a leg up on the reform of the film industry. Prizes are offered for the film director who can depict the daily deployment of the KGB agent as dignified and "attractive."

So we can count on a Soviet James Bond being called into being before long, of course without the Western-style decadent traits of a Sean Connery or Roger Moore. Probably, he will have to live with his wife and three kids, grandparents, in-laws, and perhaps an aunt and uncle, too, who naturally all work for the KGB, in a three-room apartment—as befits the Soviet workaday routine—and take the subway to work.

For the upper-level party functionaries and other members of the Soviet elite there always remains the comfort of keeping their own film projector "made outside the U.S.S.R." in their own homes. Despite Central Committee resolutions, they can thus continue to enjoy undisturbed the morally wicked Western films which, among the less mature Soviet people, would wreak irreparable moral harm.