

Representation of Soviet-Japanese Encounters in Co-production Feature Films Part 1. The Musical Harmony

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Keywords: Soviet-Japanese cultural exchanges, Soviet film, history of Japanese cinema, representation

Abstract:

In the long history of mutual Russo-Japanese screen representations co-production films provide us with rare material for better understanding the strategies of media representations, acceptable to both sides at a given moment. Assuming that the impact of co-productions on mutual perceptions may have been of special importance at the time when direct contacts between the Russians and Japanese were rather limited, I am going to examine several feature films, made during the period from the early 1960s until the end of 1980s. In particular, I focus on movies depicting Russian-Japanese encounters, the films under survey being: “The Little Fugitive” - 1966, “Moscow, My Love” -1975, “Melodies of the White Night” - 1976, “The Way to Medals” - 1979, “A Step” - 1989.

In Part 1 of the article I give a brief outline of the history of Japanese-Russian cooperation in film-making and then try to situate in this historical context the first co-production film, “The Little

Fugitive”, 1966.

I assume, that in the 60's, when the image of Soviet-Japanese partnership was constructed from the zero level and took its aim at overshadowing the images of mutual hostility and hatred, children were represented as mediators connecting the two countries. The notion of childish innocence was helpful in abolishing all painful remembrances of the past. At the same time a child represents a notion of the future bloom, so the dream of partnership is projected into the future.

One more important symbolic image, presented by “The Little Fugitive” and persistent in the co-production movies is the image of an orphan. An orphan might be adopted into a new family, the biological family might be substituted with the spiritual one.

論文

Being a unique combination of mass medium, art form, and industry, cinema provides opportunities to work as partners both in business and in the creative sphere, and to project on screen a collective dream about the desired patterns of mutual relations. This opportunity was used by Japanese and Russian filmmakers in more than a dozen co-productions during the period from the late 1960s till now. Among them are not only feature films, but also documentaries and semi-documentaries of various lengths, as well as animations. The recent successful release in Japan of the Soviet animation serial of the 70`s about the funny and touching animal Cheburashka is likely to result in a new co-production project. The “father” of Cheburashka, children`s writer E. Uspenski, and animator A.Tatarski explained on Russian TV (ORT channel, 26.04.2002) about their plans to come to Japan and make a new version of Cheburashka animation in 30 installments.

However during the Cold War, for many reasons, political as well as

economical, it was impossible for a foreign company to shoot a film about Russia on Russian location or to recruit Russian cinematographers without the permission and supervision of the highest bodies of power in the USSR. On the other hand, the Soviet filmmakers, like all other citizens of the USSR, had no freedom to cross the borders of their country. At that time a very special kind of international cooperation in film making was established. In Russian it was called “sovmyestni film”, which literally means “joint production”. More than fifty “joint productions” with different countries of the world (India, Italy, Norway, Poland, USA, etc.) were made during the period from 1953 (Stalin’s death) till 1991 (the breakup of the USSR).

For the Soviet film makers the “joint production” was a synonym of compromise with market economy, modern mass culture and, very often, one’s own artistic tastes - because too many interests, often contradicting, had to be respected. For the foreign film makers such projects offered the rare opportunity to see the life in USSR with their own eyes, and for many of them it was a very personal matter.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the state-owned soviet cinema system the modes of cooperation in filmmaking tended to change from scrupulously measured parity in “the right to represent” to shared investment or the mutual providing of services (lending costumes and requisite assistance to the other side at work on one’s location, participation of foreign actors and other staff in the other side’s project). Cooperation of the Japanese and Russian filmmakers gradually took the same shape as in any other case of international filmmaking cooperation.

The role of co-production features in mutual visualization also changed radically with the opening of the iron curtain, the growth of mutual contacts on grass-roots level and the newly established leadership of TV, homevideo (with world-wide distribution) and the Internet .

Assuming that the impact of co-productions on mutual perceptions may

have been of special importance at a time when direct contact between the Russians and the Japanese were rather limited, I shall examine several feature films, made during the period from the early 1960s until the end of the 1980s, which for the Russian cinema coincides with the Soviet period of its history.

In this retrospective survey I focus particularly on movies depicting Russian-Japanese encounters, excluding such notable and internationally recognized film as “Dersu Uzala” (1976) by Kurosawa Akira. The films under survey are: “The Little Fugitive” - 1966, “Moscow, My Love” -1975, “Melodies of the White Night” - 1976, “The Way to Medals” - 1979, and “A Step” - 1989.

Two films, shot after Perestroika by the Japanese directors on Russian location and with the participation of Russian staff (“Under the Aurora” - 1990, “Dreams about Russia” - 1993), I also prefer to leave out of the frame of this article, as both are the film versions of historical novels. I would like to concentrate here on movies based upon original scripts, which were specially prepared by international teams of established Russian and Japanese authors.

In Part 1 of the article I give a brief outline of the history of Japanese-Russian cooperation in film-making and then try to situate in this historical context the first co-production film, “The Little Fugitive”, 1966.

As far as I am aware, “The Little Fugitive”, as well as the other Japanese-Russian co-productions, have never been seriously studied or even seriously considered by film-critics or scholars. So I could not estimate the real influence of the film on public opinion in both countries. The critical materials of the time were flatly favorable just because diplomatic ethics were concerned.

Fortunately, the process of shooting “The Little Fugitive” is well documented in the Soviet Archives, and I could concentrate on the transformation of the initial idea and speculate about the underlying

ideological and psychological motives. I have used production materials (the drafts, suggestions in memos) from the Soviet Studios story files and from the Archives of the State Cinematography Committee (supreme authority on the state owned cinema in the Soviet Union, which still exists currently). I also interviewed three Russian cinematographers (one script writer and two film directors), who worked on the Soviet-Japanese co-productions.

But still there are some methodological problems. In fact, all the collaborative efforts necessary to produce a cooperative work of art are never scrupulously documented and we have no chance to restore in full scale the process of reconciliation of interests and ideals of the different sides, the more so when an international team is at work. And of course we must bear in mind that memoirs are always subjective.

At best, I can speculate on the nature of historical dynamics in the screen representation of Russian-Japanese encounters during the past four decades relying on my personal impressions as a highly motivated spectator. Fortunately, four of the five films under examination were recently released in Russia in video format, and all the other Japanese-Russian co-productions were accessible at the State Film Archives of Russia.

Japanese-Russian Cine-Contacts and Japanese -Soviet Co-productions

The Russians and Japanese were not completely alien to each other even at the dawn of cinema's emerging as a mass medium in Japan. The beginning of the 20th century was marked in Japan with a burning interest in Russian literature, which was extensively translated, and it is no surprise to find out that the first film version of a novel in Japan was "Katyusha" (1914), based on "Resurrection" by L.Tolstoy¹.

Russian emigrant actress Anna Slavina taught western dance and manners to the first generation of pupils at the Acting school of Shochiku Film Company, organized in 1920. The daughter of Anna Slavina,

Ekaterina, became the first European actress to play leading roles in Japanese movies². Unfortunately, the films with Ekaterina Slavina did not survive, but it is known that in the feature “Hikari ni Tatsu Onna” (1920) she played the part of the Russian emigrant girl, singing in the opera theatre in Asakusa³.

The great achievements of Russian avant-garde revolutionary cinema drew attention of the Japanese artistic elite, though the films of Eisenstein, Pudovkin or Vertov rarely reached Japanese screens, and if they did, were severely butchered by censors⁴. At any rate in 1928, Kinugasa Teinosuke, the future director of the first Soviet-Japanese co-production movie, went on a kind of pilgrimage to Moscow, to meet with Eisenstein and Pudovkin before proceeding to Berlin to nurture his interest in expressionism⁵.

Sometimes the influence of Russian film theory and practice on Japanese filmmakers was direct, as in the case of the notable Japanese film director Kamei Fumio, who was educated in the Leningrad Institute of Art Studies (1928-1931).

In spite of very uneasy relations between the two countries before and immediately after World War II, which led to strict limitations on the showing of Soviet films in Japan and a total absence of Japanese films on the Soviet screen, a film was shot on location in Manchuria in 1943 by a Japanese director, with many parts played by Russian emigrants.

The Japanese bureaucracy in the newly established state of Manchukuo used every effort to assimilate its multinational population into a kind of new family, and movies reflected this politics in so-called “continental series.” The “continental series” made jointly by Toho film studio and its Manchurian branch “Man`ei”, with the famous actress Ri-Koran (Yamaguchi Yoshiko), usually showed love and friendship between representatives of different nationalities living in Manchuria and the good, patronizing Japanese. One such film, “My Nightingale” (Watashi no Uguisu, 1943), told the story of a Japanese orphan girl raised up by Russian

emigrant opera singer Andrei Dmitrievich Panin⁶. The girl (Ri-Koran), who is trained in opera singing by her stepfather, wins popularity as a singer in Harbin and falls in love with a Japanese youth. The film was directed by Shimazu Yasujiro, and if it had been shown to the public, it could have been the first musical by a Japanese film director, as it was a real *divertissement* of musical performances ranging from opera to cabaret and folk dances, all done by Russian emigrant troupes of Harbin. But the film was never shown in Manchuria, labeled by the Kwantoon Army ideological authorities as “running counter to national policy and being of no value either for enlightenment or for amusement”⁷.

In the Soviet Union, from the middle of the 1930s to the beginning of the war with Nazi Germany in 1941, the theme of the aggressive character of Japanese imperialism was trivial in feature films. Such world renowned film directors as Alexandre Dovjlenko or Grigorii and Sergei Vasiliev constructed the image of cunning and cruel Japanese on the Soviet screen⁸. At the same time, the leading journal on the problems of cinema theory and practice, “*Iskusstvo kino*” informed its readers, though scantily, about the situation in Japanese film⁹.

After the restoration of Soviet-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1956, cultural exchanges between the two countries emerged. Japanese filmmakers showed their movies at the Moscow International Film Festival, and beginning in 1963, festivals of Japanese cinema in the Soviet Union, and similar festivals of Soviet cinema in Japan became traditional celebrations of mutual interest in the culture of the other country¹⁰.

I can only rely on the documents preserved in the Archives of the State Cinematography Committee, but it turns out that as early as 1959, during the Moscow International Film Festival, Ushihara Kiyohiko expressed an interest in his company (Geijutsu Eigasha) coproducing a movie with the Soviet Union about the history of Russian-Japanese encounters¹¹. (It is interesting to note that Ushihara Kiyohiko in his young days was a pupil of

Anna Slavina at the Shochiku Acting School, and in 1923 he was a film director of one of the films with Ekaterina Slavina starring). Though Soviet authorities favorably accepted the idea of Ushihara and even ordered the preparation of a scenario based on the famous captain Golovnin's diary of his 1811-1814 captivity in Japan, the project was not realized¹².

It seems that at that moment both countries were much more interested in the present and future status of their relations. This idea was boldly expressed by Nagata Masaichi, President of the Daiei Film Company. He met with the Soviet delegation during the Second Festival of the Soviet Films in Tokyo (November 1964), and said that he would be more interested in the projects, corresponding to the "latest developments, friendly contacts between Soviet and Japanese young people, tours of the Soviet ballet and circus, and sport celebrities in Japan"¹³.

Nagata Masaichi as a producer later brought into being the first Japanese-Soviet co-production film "The Little Fugitive" (1966). As I will show, the film used the pattern of representation already tried in Japan - the image of Russian performer teaching music and art to the Japanese pupil, symbolically adopting him into a new multinational family.

For the Soviet side the image of Russian-Japanese encounters via common love for music was also very familiar. In 1961, the Moscow Film Studio named after M. Gorky released one movie, which was not a co-production nominally, but could not appear without the cooperation of the Russians and Japanese; the movie was based on the script of Agnia Barto, the renowned author of children's literature. We have no evidence that the script was commissioned to Barto with the intention of using it in the co-production project, but it is very likely that Agnia Barto knew about plans for making a Soviet-Japanese movie, and wrote her script to offer it for the joint project. As it became the first Soviet feature film to positively present the image of Japan and the Japanese people, I would like to discuss it in more detail.

“Ten Thousand Boys” - The First Image of Friendly Japanese on the Soviet Screen

“Ten Thousand Boys” was a film produced by two directors. One of them was Russian, Boris Buneev, the other Japanese, Okada Yoshiko. Okada Yoshiko (1902-1992), a popular movie star in Japan in the 1930s, defected in 1938 with her lover Sugimoto Ryokichi to the Soviet Union, and spent ten years in one of Stalin’s prison camps. Obviously, coming to the Soviet Union was on the initiative of Sugimoto Ryokichi, theater director and playwright, Russian translator, and an active member of the then-outlawed Communist Party of Japan. In the USSR Sugimoto was sentenced to death as a spy in 1938, and Okada after her ten year sentence expired, began to work as a Japanese speaking expert at Radio Moscow. At Radio Moscow, Okada was doing programs on Russian literature and on Moscow theater life, and she even became a student at Moscow State Institute of Theater Arts, to achieve the initial goal of her hard journey to the USSR. Her theater career in the Soviet Union began with staging in 1959 the play “Onna no Issho” (“Life of a Woman”) by Morimoto Kaoru, which she translated into Russian herself. It was staged at the Mayakovsky Theater under the title “Stolen Life,” and enjoyed popularity. Okada Yoshiko was a perfect candidate for shooting the first Russian film about Japan not intended to be a depiction of the “vicious Japanese enemy.”

As Okada’s co-director Boris Buneev recollected in a private talk (18.11.2001), she was a brilliant partner - she never criticized inaccuracies in the depiction of Japan and the Japanese by Russians without good reason, and fairly admitted her own lack of knowledge about postwar Japan (after a 34-year-long interval she returned to Japan in 1972). Okada not only co-directed the film, but she played a part in it, as did her husband Takiguchi Shintaro, who worked at Radio Moscow¹⁴. Other roles of Japanese heroes were played by members of the Japanese community in Moscow (students,

journalists), and partly by the Soviet staff of Asian origins (Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh). Japanese living in Moscow were invited to take part in the project, and they generously shared their knowledge of “things Japanese” with the Russian director and stage director, even bringing from Japan some stage requisite at their own expense, wrote slogans and signboards, and added Japanese dubbing. Such close and friendly cooperation of Russians and Japanese in filmmaking was not possible until the so called Khrushchev Thaw, partly due to suspicion toward foreigners under the Stalin regime, and partly because of the ultimately negative images of the Japanese people in the Soviet movies of the 1930s (the parts of Japanese as enemies were played in those feature films by Koreans or even Caucasian Russians, but never by members of the Japanese community in Moscow). Though the movie “Ten Thousand Boys” depicted postwar Japan, it was shot in the Soviet Union, in the Georgian town of Batumi.

The story of the film is as follows: An 11-year-old Japanese orphan boy Taro (played by Ravshan Agzamov), living in a small sea village Takahama, strikingly resembles the deceased son of an elderly couple, Michiko and Ryu, who live nearby. As they lost their boy in Hiroshima, they actively take part in antiwar demonstrations and Michiko (Okada Yoshiko) is even intending to visit Moscow as a member of the Democratic Women’s Congress. The likeness of Taro to her son is painful for the woman, and her husband protects her from meeting with the boy. Meanwhile the boy makes friends with a Russian violinist touring in Japan and asks him for a photo of a Soviet boy, who could become his pen pal. The violinist tells the story about Taro on Soviet radio, and thousands of Russian children write letters to him. To answer all the letters Taro needs money, and he finds a job as a singer and entertainer in a bar, which is owned by an American. The cunning and greedy American mistress exploits Taro, and even discards his letters received from the USSR. But her daughter Katherine helps Taro to get the letters back, and with the aid of the

neighborhood community all the letters are answered and directly handed over to Moscow, by the members of the Democratic Women's Congress delegation departing to the USSR. The last line of the film belongs to Michiko, who is standing on board a ship going to the USSR. She looks tenderly at Taro and says to her companion: "This is my son, ten thousand boys helped me to find him".

"Ten Thousand Boys" was a movie intended for children, a new postwar generation, not bearing stereotypical images of the Japanese as enemies, which were characteristic for the Soviet films in the prewar period. If we speculate about what sort of Japanese imagery was acute in the film, we can say that it was first of all the image of Japan as "a country of unique culture." The other image was that of a country with an American presence. Though America was represented by a charming girl called Katherine (a very convincing character, as the part was played by a non-Russian girl Jenny Desire, with her slightly accented Russian), and a not at all charming but funny Katherine's mother, the question comes: why Americans? As the theme of the atomic bomb was explicitly declared in the film, the image of Japan as a victim of American Imperialism, and the Japanese as people constantly struggling for peace was also at hand. It was the image of Japan, constructed by the Soviet mass-media of the period. The quotation below is from an article by Semyon Verbitsky, dedicated to the dynamics of the image of Japan in the mass consciousness of the Soviet people:

"Only Soviet ideological propaganda could form and support such contradictory stereotypes as "Japan is heading down the road of remilitarization" and "the peaceful Japanese people." Antimilitary demonstrations by the Japanese with white kerchiefs around their heads, pacifist processions of Buddhists, flotillas of small boats around American warships at the entrance to Japanese ports - such images constantly appeared on Soviet television and came to symbolize political life in postwar Japan for the Soviet people. Undoubtedly, the "Hiroshima



Photo 1. Ten Thousand Boys. (Reproduction of the still from the film, the courtesy of M.Gorki Film Studio Archives).



Photo 2. Ten Thousand Boys. (Reproduction of the still from the film, the courtesy of M.Gorki Film Studio Archives). The Japanese hero of the film Taro and the American girl Katherine.

complex” played the main role in the formation of the image of the “peace-loving Japanese people”¹⁵.

Surely, the image of peace-loving Japanese people was present in this unpretentious children's feature, but we can also see an ironic attitude to the cliched images of Soviet propaganda, such as “fetters of Imperialism,” “struggle for peace” and so on.

For example, all foreign contacts of the Soviet people in the film are directed and controlled by the so-called House of Friendship. Even children in the film know that the House of Friendship is a place to make speeches. When the Soviet children receive no answer from Taro, they go to the House of Friendship and in the splendid conference hall they begin imitating an adult political rally.

For the young generation of Soviet artistic intelligentsia of the 60s, it was very typical to look at the Soviet realities skeptically and critically. That is what we see in the film “Ten Thousand Boys.” On the other hand, foreign location is represented as a projection of some qualities, desirable for one's country and people. The Japanese boy and the American girl are energetic, resourceful, lively, they are even more attractive than Soviet children. The boy deprives himself of a bicycle to send his photo to Soviet pen pals, the girl gives all her pocket money to get back letters, discarded by her mother. (Photo 1, 2). Such unconventional way of representation could not escape the notice of those who watched the film. During the discussion of the new film, held at M. Gorky Film Studio on October 29, 1961, scriptwriter Valentine Yezhov said:

“The Japanese film location is based on children's fates, they live their lives. But in the Soviet area, Soviet children embody the thesis ‘Let us struggle for peace’. ...It turns out that the life of our children is very boring, and the life of the Japanese boy is excellent and adventurous.”¹⁶

To sum up, Japan was represented to postwar Soviet children as a beautiful country, where people were very polite and very friendly (your

Japanese pen pal will possibly begin each day by saying good morning to your photo), but sending the photo seemed to be the only way to communicate with Japanese children. All the contacts turn out to be under the control of elders and special authorities (House of Friendship) and uncontrolled contacts seem to cause problems for both sides. The adult Russians (violinist Borisov) in Japan have contact only with the Japanese “struggling for peace” or with children, and for the Japanese, visiting Russia is likely through political activities (Congress of Democratic Women).

Now let us compare the image of Japanese-Russian contacts in “Ten Thousand Boys” with that of the jointly produced movie “The Little Fugitive,” also shot for children.

“The Little Fugitive”, 1966

The First Soviet-Japanese Co-production Movie

In the initial version of the “Ten Thousand Boys” script Taro secretly defected from Japan to the Soviet Union on board a Soviet ship. In the movie there is no such scene. But the hero of “The Little Fugitive” actually hides himself among the cargo and goes to Vladivostock on board a freighter. Some other details like the violin of the main Russian hero, orphanhood of the Japanese boy hero and his work in the restaurant also remind of “Ten Thousand Boys.” The title of the Russian version of the script for the first Soviet-Japanese co-production was “Ten Thousand Kilometres,” again reverberating with “Ten Thousand Boys.” From the Japanese side another title was proposed which provoked other associations. “Chiisai Tobosha”, though translated into Russian as “The Little Fugitive”, literally means “Little Deserter,” and we can guess that defection from one’s motherland posed an ethical problem. The problem had been already represented in the movie “Deserter” (1933), by the famous Soviet director V. Pudovkin, where the German dock worker, tired of striking fled from Germany to the USSR and suffered moral guilt for it. We cannot be sure

that Pudovkin's "Deserter" was known to the Japanese members of the project, but if it was, the allusion seems clear.

The story told in the movie "Little Fugitive" is quite simple.

Ken, a nine year old boy, lives with his uncle, who is a drunkard and a degraded person, earning his living as a restaurant musician. Every evening Ken plays violin in restaurants with his uncle and he is used to leading his uncle home and undressing and putting him to bed after he has drunk too much. Ken begins to dream about finding his father after his uncle tells him that his father, a remarkable violinist, lives in Moscow. Ken manages to get on board a Soviet ship unnoticed and after being interrogated by Soviet frontier guards he is sent to Moscow with a retired military musician. Ken travels across Siberia, meeting with different people and getting help from them, and when he finally reaches Moscow, he learns through the Japanese embassy that his father has died. Under the guidance of his Russian friend, a famous circus clown Yuri Nikulin, whom he befriended in Japan during the tour of a Soviet circus, Ken enters the musical school for children affiliated with the Moscow Conservatory. Several years later Ken comes to Japan as a member of the Soviet Symphony Orchestra. Ken's skillful violin playing as a soloist in the orchestra is shown on TV and he becomes popular; but his only dream is to meet with his uncle. His uncle, who has given up drinking, is working in an orphanage, and abstains from meeting his nephew: he is full of repentance for having doomed the little boy to a tough ordeal in a faraway country, and he feels himself unworthy of such a talented and well-educated nephew.

Being the first attempt at a full-scale Soviet-Japanese partnership in moviemaking, the project is well documented in the archives of the State Cinematography Committee and M. Gorky Film Studio¹⁷. The preliminary agreement regarding the shooting of the M. Gorky Film Studio and Daiei Company joint production was signed on September 25, 1965. Both sides agreed to bear 50% of the project cost without using foreign currency.

Distribution rights were granted to each side in its licensed territory. Similar conditions of co-production with countries of free market economies (France, Italy) had already been approved by the middle of the 60's. As the movie was planned to become a commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the restoration of Soviet-Japanese diplomatic relations (October 1966)¹⁸, it was meant to be neutral and politically correct in nature.

Both sides, Soviet and Japanese, proposed several librettos for the future film¹⁹. Among Soviet librettos one was about the real person, the 14-year-old Sato Yoko, who came to Moscow to be a pupil of the famous violinist Kogan. The other used as a starting point the fact of Sulamith Messerer's teaching Russian ballet in Japan. (Later the idea was used in the feature "Moscow, My Love", 1975).

The Japanese screen writers based their stories on Japanese admiration for the Soviet school of classical music (Oguni Hideo), the popularity of the Soviet circus, the good reputation of Soviet medical care (Saito Yonejiro), and the mutual aid of Soviet and Japanese sailors in a shipwreck



Photo 3. The Little Fugitive. (Reproduction of the still from the film, the courtesy of M.Gorki Film Studio Archives).

(Tsukaguchi Kazuo and Ito Takeo).

The script of Oguni Hideo, who was a scriptwriter for Kurosawa's masterpieces ("The Red Beard" and others), became the basis of the film, though the motives of other Japanese librettos were also used. For example, the theme of the circus was introduced in a kind of pantomimic intermedia of the famous Soviet clown Yuri Nikulin. (Photo 3).

The libretto of Oguni Hideo, "The Teacher and the Pupil," told a story of Noda Nobuyuki, who had a nonconforming and difficult personality, was an unsuccessful teacher of violin, and who finally met his best pupil, the dumb orphan boy Kawama Ken. Kawama enters Noda's house with the other boys from the orphanage intending burglary, but his interest in violin and his amazing progress forces the teacher to write a letter to Moscow, to the famous violinist David Oistrakh. He asks him to take Ken as a pupil. Ken goes to Moscow, and the climax is his return to Japan, where he plays solo, with both of his teachers sitting side by side in the auditorium and listening to his music.

The part of the script depicting Ken's life in the USSR was commissioned to the renowned Soviet playwright Emil Braginski, author of many popular comedies, and the young promising author Andrey Bitov, now the classic of modern Russian literature.

The Japanese part in its final version underwent significant changes as compared with the initial libretto of Oguni Hideo. And though we cannot speculate if it was the result of Soviet-Japanese negotiations or not, we can easily discover that the image of Ken was redefined from an outcast (dumb, orphan criminal), to an ordinary boy. Noda as violin teacher became Ken's only relative, his irresponsible drunkard uncle, and Ken's desire to flee Japan was supported by strong motivation - the aspiration to reunite with his lost father.

The situation of the boy's defecting to the USSR was very difficult and meaningful to both sides, and it became the central point of many

discussions. As we can see from the archival documents, the Japanese side wanted to present the boy's journey through Siberia as a hard toil in search of his father, the Japanese POW. Oguni Hideo, the script writer, also insisted that the boy should be constantly chased by the Soviet Militia, but every time somehow manage to escape²⁰. The Soviet scriptwriters, on the contrary, tried to make the boy's father a Hiroshima survivor, receiving medical care in the USSR, and their presentation of the Militia was quite unusual : "Militia allows the boy to escape, feeling sympathy with his noble impulse"²¹.

In the scenario Ken, who returned to Japan after spending 6 years in the USSR, rhetorically asked: "How could my uncle, who loved me, doom an 11-year-old boy to such an ordeal!"²². There is no such line in the film; the boy's journey along the Great Siberian Railway is shown as a sequence of funny and touching encounters with different people, who are happy to protect and to help him. But still there is one episode in the movie, which reminds us about what crossing the border of the USSR without permission



Photo 4. The Little Fugitive. (Reproduction of the still from the production files of M.Gorki Film Studio , the courtesy of Studio Archives)

really meant in the context of a classical Soviet film. When the little Japanese boy Ken seeks refuge from rain in a hunter's hut in the Siberian Taiga, he is found there by an adolescent hunter, Vaska. Having noticed Vaska's gun, Ken snatches at a log to protect his life. (Photo 4). After a while we see the boys, absolutely naked because their clothes had been put off to dry, peacefully drinking tea and sharing bread. The episode may be perceived as a parody of Dovzhenko's "Aerograd" (1935), where a samurai-plotter hid himself in a hunter's hut, and having been found by a Soviet pilot, he took off his clothes to commit "seppuku". The Russian hunter, who helped the samurai to hide and brought him food, was shot as a traitor by his closest friend. In the jointly-produced movie "The Little Fugitive" this stereotype is canceled. Distrust and suspicion were fading away to be replaced by humanitarian principles: to feed the hungry, to protect the weak, to restore broken family ties.

The fullest accomplishment of humanitarianism can be seen at the grassroots level, in the relations between the so-called ordinary people. The atmosphere of warm human brotherhood is equally characteristic of the narrow streets and cheap restaurants of a Japanese city and of the big and small towns of the USSR. Even the official authorities of both countries (Frontier-guards, Police) are represented by people with hearts of gold, feeling compassion for every human.

The world of the movie is free of social tensions in the Soviet location, but the Japanese location is ambivalent. When the hero defects, Japan is in a state of social decay: children work to help their parents though it is prohibited by law, unhappy adults drink alcohol. When Ken returns to Japan after ten years, Japan seems to have all its problems solved: Ken's friend, who as a child sold flowers in the streets, now has got a flower shop of her own, the orphans live in a beautiful orphanage, the drunkard uncle is cured of his alcohol addiction.

The typical Soviet propaganda theme regarding the competition between

the two social systems, socialism and capitalism, is absent in this jointly produced film. The director of M.Gorky Film Studio, G. Britikov, was quite pragmatic about that: "If you make it interesting, it will be useful for Russians, the Japanese, and the box office"²³. But we should not forget that along with co-productions there were other Soviet films dealing with the theme of Soviet-Japanese encounters. Simultaneously with "The Little Fugitive," the M.Gorky Film Studio was shooting the historical movie "Password Not Required" ("Parol ne nujen") about the Japanese intervention in the Far East of the 20s, where the Japanese, though in the historical retrospective, were represented as insidious enemies.

It can be assumed that in the 60s only the Japanese children, who could not bear any responsibilities for past clashes, were credited by the Soviet side with the best qualities of the national character and represented as partners in cultural exchange. The child-hero is also stressed through the notion of the big, mighty USSR culturally patronizing the small country of Japan. Such representation was accepted by the Japanese side with certain reservations. The final part of the movie actually ascribes such representation to the past (presumably the post war 50s), and the last shots of the film show the Japanese landscape, unusually spacious fields, or maybe gardens, with playing children. The message is clear - from now on Japan will become a big country with a bright future for its children.

The question is: what will become of Soviet-Japanese contacts? Do they have any future in this perspective? The answer of the film is presumably contained in its documentary episode, when a real person, Moscow Chamber Orchestra conductor L.Barshay, is shown at the press conference, giving an interview about Soviet-Japanese mutual exchanges of guest musical performances. Does it mean that on the personal level the contacts will fade, as Japan will cope by itself with the problem of educating its young talents? Or does it mean that the Japanese children will have no need to defect to the Soviet Union secretly, since proper cultural exchanges are

established? The answer of the first Soviet-Japanese co-production is ambivalent, but in the films of the 70s the Russian-Japanese encounters will be represented blooming into passionate dramatic romance.

Notes

- 1 See: *Yamada Kazuo* . “Borba za Ekran” (Struggle for the Screen). In *Iz Istorii Kino* (From the History of Cinema). Moscow, 1963. P. 160.
- 2 About Anna Slavina and her daughter Ekaterina (Kitti) Slavina see: 沢田和彦 「女優スラーヴィナ母娘の旅路 - 来日白系ロシア人研究」、『埼玉大学紀要』32 - 1、1996年、77 - 95頁。
- 3 Ibid. P. 82.
- 4 Yamada Kazuo published in the Soviet Union in Russian his survey of Russian films, demonstrated in Japan until the beginning of 60`s, see: *Yamada Kazuo* , *ibid.*, pp. 159-172.
- 5 Kinugasa Teinosuke published recollections of his visit to Moscow in: 衣笠貞之助 『わが映画の青春』(中公新書489) 中央公論社、1977年、105 - 111頁。
- 6 About the history of the film “Watashi no Uguisu” and the personal encounters of Yamaguchi Yoshiko with Russian emigrants see: 山口淑子、藤原作弥 『李香蘭私の半生』(新潮文庫 560) 新潮社、1987年、269 - 280頁。
- 7 Ibid. P.278.
- 8 I have found 9 Soviet feature films and one animation, depicting the Japanese as an enemy and shot in the USSR during the period from 1935 till 1946.
- 9 See: *S.Sano* . «Samurai na ekrane» (Samurai on Screen). In *Iskusstvo Kino* , 1935, 1, pp.85-87.
- 10 Many documents concerning the festivals of the Japanese and Soviet films in both countries in the 60s are stored in the files of The State Cinematography Committee. These files are preserved in the State Archives of Literature and Art in Moscow. In this article I use the English transliteration of the Russian abbreviation for State Archives of Literature and Art: RGALI. I give codes of files, preserved in RGALI without their titles, usually very long and confusing. For example, about the first festival of Japanese and Russian film in 1963 see: RGALI 2944. 13. 124.
- 11 RGALI 2944. 13. 336. P.3.
- 12 See: RGALI 2944. 1. 124. P.20.

- 13 RGALI 2944. 13. 336. P.8.
- 14 Okada's recollections about shooting the film see in 岡田嘉子 『悔いなき命を』
日本図書センター、1999年、224-226頁。
- 15 Verbitsky, S. *Perceptions of Japan in the USSR during the Cold War and
Perestroika*. In *Misperceptions between Japan and Russia: The Carl Beck Papers in
Russian and East European Studies*, 1503, 2000. P.17.
- 16 RGALI 2468. 3. 81. P.21.
- 17 See: RGALI 2468. 6. 230-235, 240.
- 18 In the Archive files of the film there is a letter, dated 02.03.1966, from the Soviet
Ambassador in Japan V.Vinogradov, who wrote about the necessity to release the
movie by October 1966. See: RGALI 2944. 13. 922. In fact, the premier in Japan
took place on December 14, 1966, and in Russia it was even later, February 3, 1967.
- 19 See: RGALI 2944. 13. 606.
- 20 RGALI 2944. 13. 606. P.63.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 RGALI 2468. 6. 235. P.38.
- 23 RGALI 2468. 6. 240. P.40..

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