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Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil is proud to exhibit works which, due to their heterogeneity, not only open doors for an analysis of the evolution of the cinematographic language, but also encourage historical contemplation.

The films of the Dziga Vertov Group Exhibition redeem radical productions from the 1960's and 1970's, of which Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin were part. In the aftermath of the political conflicts of May 1968, the filmmakers gathered with French intellectuals around the ideas of Mao Tse-Tung to form the group – whose name pays homage to the soviet filmmaker who revolutionized the language of cinema in the 1920's. The Dziga Vertov Group was a definitive breakup with commercial cinema, and, according to Godard himself, it was aimed at establishing a new unit that would produce not political films, but make "political films politically".

Scholars, actors and other filmmakers were part of these collective experiments, including Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Gian Maria Volonté, Yves Montand, Jane Fonda, and even Glauber Rocha. Godard's primary collaborator, political activist and filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin – at that time editor of the newspaper *Le Monde* – comes to Brazil for the first time to present the movies created by the Group. These are rare works, of difficult exhibition and still widely unknown by the Brazilian public.

In retrospect, such experiences are still considered to be revolutionary in every sense. They brought innovations to the cinematic language, which years later would undergo deep changes due to the advent of electronic media. In showing the complete works of the Dziga Vertov Group, Banco do Brasil supports and enriches the debate on the memory and history of cinema.

Sponsorship and Execution

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Opening cans of Campbell's soup

Jane de Almeida

The films made by the Dziga Vertov Group are being shown in Brazil for the first time. Given their complexity and temporal displacement and that they have never been seen by most people here, a number of questions have been part and parcel of this production since this Exhibition was conceived, a little more than two years ago.

They include: how does one show a collection of films that are extremely complex and that, in simplified terms, were seen as being mere political pamphlets by the film critics, or as extravagant exercises in cinema for political involvement? How does one introduce to the Brazilian public the effects of the dialectic process produced by the proposal, a film experience that is unique in its disassociation between sound and image – whether this was successful or not –, at a time when the funding policies for cinema are being discussed on a national level in terms of public heritage and financial return as a response to the question of the type of images that should be produced? How does one talk about a proposal for collective production against that of authorship and which as a consequence generates a series of misunderstandings regarding the very authorship of the films? Not to mention the fact that one of the participants is one of the most important directors in the history of cinema and that he was one of those responsible for the phenomenon of film authorship. Finally, how does one present films that were made more than 30 years ago in a climate of intense political debate from which the Brazilian public was forced to retire?

These are questions that are put forward in this book and which the same is surely unable to answer. The articles were selected based on three different angles: the Dziga Vertov Group and its history, the relationship of Glauber Rocha with the Group and the presence of Jean-Pierre Gorin at this Exhibition.

Curadora

It is hoped that this will serve as an initial point of reference and inspiration for the new questions that are certain to arise from the explanations and misunderstandings examined by the authors.

The arrival of the Dziga Vertov Group was accompanied by the arrival of others, such as the ARC Group (Atelier de recherche cinématographique) and Chris Marker's SLON group, aided by the new technologies for capture and editing of the *ciné-tracts*, since these mini films could be edited directly on the camera, promoting the idea of the absence of authorship (or of sole authorship) in the name of a collective work. Thus, *Un film comme les autres* is the precursor of the series, while not yet being named as a Dziga Vertov Group film ¹. It is only later on, probably after *British Sounds*, that the group took on the name of "Dziga Vertov", due to the influence of Jean-Pierre Gorin. With *Vent d'Est*, the group is established and Godard announces that for the Russian filmmaker Vertov, the definition of *Kinoki* is not of filmmaker, but rather of filmhand, differentiating *moviemaker* from *film worker* ².

Alongside Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin, some other members were more frequent participants, such as Jean-Henri Roger, who is responsible for *British Sounds* and *Pravda*, writing scripts and directing with Godard; the photographer Paul Burron; Gérard Martin, who is sometimes cited as being co-director of *Vent d'Est*; and Anne Wiazemsky, who at that time was married to Godard and who acted in a number of the films of the Group. Other participants were at the fringes of this movement and their precise participation is not known. This, in a way, is a consequence of the proposal of collective filmmaking. Ironically, despite the collaborative will, the films are generally considered and analyzed as being part of Godard's filmography alone. Another consequence is that until not long ago the films appear to have been adrift among the distributors, who did not know who to ask for the rights of exhibition. For some time we had no clues as to how to obtain them, until after a festival of political films in Nantes, in 2003, when Gaumont sent us an answer ³. The same thing occurs when seeking to list the credits for the films, since the entire technical credit is resumed under the name of the Dziga Vertov Group, with one or another name attached.

¹ ¹ Godard himself admits that *Um film comme les autres* is the first in the series of revolutionary films he made, in an interview for Kent E. Carrol published in "Film and revolution: Interview with the Dziga-Vertov Group". In *Focus on Godard*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1972, p.53.

² ¹ In the same interview cited above for Kent E. Carrol given in English in 1970, p. 50.

³ ¹ The *Cahiers du Cinéma* comment on this problem when they write about the Festival of Nantes. Patrice BLOUIN. "Mémoire. Où est le cinéma politique ?" Paris, April 2003. pp. 10-12.

In extreme cases, as in the text by James MacBean on *Vent d'Est* published in this catalogue, the films appear solely as works by Jean-Luc Godard. Instead of crediting the films simply to the "Dziga Vertov Group", we decided to publish a credit guide with references to all the different sources. If on one hand this appears contradictory to the proposals of the Group, on the other it brings a little of the historicity of the process and its reception, and also enlists subjectivities somehow and examines issues related to collective work. This initiative appears to be coherent when one considers the path marked out by the films of the Group. Each film attempts to answer questions remaining from its predecessors and, almost in the end, in *Tout va bien* (which at this stage is not a film by the Group, but rather by Godard and Gorin and signed as such), the conclusion regarding the collective, arising from an initial disappointment with the workers organizations, falls more evidently upon the individual story as being that which constructs the greater history. In a way, this is also the procedure in *Letter to Jane*. Nowadays it is more common to think that the Group came into being as a result of the effort and desire of Godard and Gorin. Gorin answers, in an interview given in 1970, when he and Godard were asked how many people comprised the Dziga Vertov Group: "At this moment, two, but we are not even sure. There is a left wing and a right wing. Sometimes he is the left and I am the right, it is a question of practice".⁴ In compliment to this statement, Godard at this time declares several times that working as a group was a way to destroy the dictatorship of the director.

After more than 35 years since its beginning, having been immediately received with a certain furor by the first viewers and soon being relegated to limbo and qualified as being "extremist", "radical", "unwatchable" and over politicized by film lovers and also overly "aestheticizing" for political cinema made at that time, these films return together in the form of presentations or as part of the cinematography of Jean-Luc Godard, or in tributes that present films made by Jean-Pierre Gorin or within a political theme regarding the 1960's and 1970's. Rarely is there an exhibition solely of "Dziga Vertov Group" films and, for this reason, another question becomes necessary: what does it mean to watch these films today? Before attempting to frame them within a more temporal perspective,



14 | Michael GOODWIN, Tom LUDDY and Naomi WISE. "The Dziga Vertov film group in America". In *Take One. The film magazine*, vol. II, n. 10. Canada, March/April 1970. pp. 8-27. Or in "The Dziga Vertov film group in "America: an interview with Jean Luc Godard and Jean Pierre Gorin", in *Cinefiles*. Internet version of the same interview: http://www.mip.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cine_doc_detail.pl/cine_img?11165?11165?1

which obliges the receptor to try and understand the object of fruition according to what it brings from its time, these films are singular experiences regarding the ideological consequences of that which one chooses as a form. The films lead Brecht beyond alienation, lending continuity to the very Brechtian lesson that the problem of form is in itself the problem of politics. And in this they bring the breeze of the freedom with which they were made, in the bold contrast of color used by those who made films to be seen and not to be read, as Gorin insists, arguing against the proclaimed end of writing ⁵. In all of the nine films, to a greater or lesser degree, the sound and the image are independent elements that sometimes dance together and sometimes clash. In this sense, the accusation of the pamphletary verbosity is an accusation that is little reflected from a hasty point of view in that which it presents. There is a first layer containing a solid presence of spoken lines. But, perhaps given the complexity that these propose, the viewer is left in a position of admitting that there are other layers to be perceived via unexpected connections that are brought to life in them.

It is very rare to see a political film that has taken its proposal as far as the films made by the Dziga Vertov Group. Of course, after the more student based political phase, after the prolonged and risky terrorist political attempts, after the growth of the consumer ideologies, after the cultivation of an independent position as a subjective ideal, it is difficult for the common contemporary man to see himself as belonging to the "bourgeois" or the "worker" group, since he has always been a part of both. But since then, the more political films that go against the grain of power have been so focused on content, so unconcerned with the consideration of form (if we wish, to be submitted to that which Hollywood defines as form), with such simplified readings of what is power, that we appear to have lost the connecting link between what happened in the days of the Group and what is happening today. There is, in this sense of loss, a desire for evolution that does not always occur, but reviewing and rethinking these films to a point beyond that of a nostalgic feeling may stimulate chains of connections that were unperceived and connections that were already thought of as established, principally in regard to the world we have constructed since May of 1968.

The first of the films, *Un film comme les autres*, shows an explosion of images from ciné-tracts made in May 1968 in black and white, intercalating the student debate on the class struggle. It is the precursor of collective film making in the

⁵ Gorin in an interview. Christian Braad THOMSEN, "Jean-Pierre Gorin interviewed. Filmmaking and history", Jump Cut, n. 3, 1974, pp. 17-19. <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC03folder/GorinIntThomson.html>

work of Godard and is born of the political discussions between Godard and Gorin⁶. The conception of this way of making films, which does not reveal identities, in as much as it favors the spoken lines in detriment to the faces of the characters, is in itself already a procedure of this way of thinking that is to take shape in the next films. However, the contrast between the colorful rural landscape and the calm of the debaters, and the images of bombs and striking workers generates, at first, two interpretations: one with regard to the differences between the classes themselves, or rather, one that poses for the film and another that “poses” for the struggle. This latter opens up the problem that was later to be questioned by the Group – as in *Lotte in Italia* – with regard to the reality of theory and the reality of practice.

The next film, *British Sounds*, was made in England, shortly after *One plus one* and from the outset the desire to film collectively was stated. Roger works with Godard and Maoism is what provides the stronger tone of the film’s political scheme. The color of the film is red and the sound is that of repetition. The seven sequences, even if declared as being political, are still presented with a certain irony and humor in the play on revolutionary clichés, such as the flag being torn at the beginning and the bloody hand grasping for the red flag at the end. The irony reveals in itself the discomfort of assuming two positions and this resource is used frequently by Godard. In fact, the nucleus of the film is loaded with ironic scenes, such as the scene with the television announcer who parts from a liberal standpoint to state prejudice and which is intercalated with scenes of a British reality that fails to bear witness to the speech of the announcer. But if we think of the seriousness of the revolutionary sound that ends the film, in synchronicity with the image, its contrast with this irony appears to reveal a certain hesitation between the Godard of *Alphaville* and the revolutionary Godard.

Vent d’Est, after *Pravda*, is the next in the series. It is entirely taken by the voice of the malign genius which, with the exception of *Tout va bien*, was to remain until *Ici et Ailleurs*. In reality it is a number of voices (and in the case of *Vent d’Est*, female), but one especially fulfills the role of dialectic differentia, and as a main thread guarantees the structure of the films. It also guarantees the deconstruction of the same in a more formal sense. Little by little, the characteristic disconnection between sound and image is what guides the films and also, gradually, gives a life of its own to the sound. *Vent d’Est* is a more vigorous work, with open questions. The voice of the malign genius answers *British Sounds* with no hesi-

† 6 | Affirmation by Gorin in *Jump Cut*.

tation and opens up an entire pathway of experiences, of which one was made with the participation of Glauber Rocha. Gorin explains that when working on the scene with Isabel Pons, the pregnant girl with the camera, it became a metaphor for the difficulties and hopes of the time that encountered at the crossroads the impossibility of a meeting between the tropicalists of the Third World and the conceptualists of the First in the question of class revolution. This impossibility is marked by the three hesitant steps taken by the pregnant girl towards Glauber and soon after her return by the same path ⁷. The voice of Glauber sings and indicates the way of the “dangerous, divine and wonderful cinema” – of that time.

Brazil was entering the most terrifying phase of the political dictatorship. Our cinema came under the censor, our thinkers were arrested, tortured and exiled; and Brazil was left with no dialogue between the inside and the outside that it had just taken up again with the modernist tradition. Glauber did not stop filming and his *Der leone have sept heads* is clearly an influence for the Dziga Vertov Group, as noted by Jean-Pierre Gorin and José Carlos Avellar, who in an article in this book also suggest a tighter exchange of influences with des-encountered solutions between the cinematographies of Glauber and Godard, of the First and the Third Worlds.

Watching these films today is like being able to see a lost part of an important discussion that may perhaps have fed a line of film making somewhat abandoned by film goers and film producers, whose aesthetic project includes the reflectivity of the apparatus and a formal experimentation in cinema. A line that unites Mário Peixoto with Júlio Bressane and which, ironically, has nothing to do with so called “political” cinema. This line includes Glauber, but it appears that the “political” side of Glauber, in terms of the more commercialized interpretation of his *Hunger Aesthetic*, has been cultivated in our cinema. This is a shame, since it diminishes the diversity of readings on the complexity of the world.

The films of the Dziga Vertov Group, which have less political importance today – in terms of the more evident political aspect, since in a way the aesthetic choice is

171 E-mail correspondence. “It is my girlfriend of the time, Isabel Pons, I enlisted to meet Glauber at the crossroad and whose pregnancy I transformed as a metaphor of our difficulties and our hopes by loading her with a camera; Glauber is in that scene because Raphael Sorin and I went to look for him in Rome; and the procedure, the ‘script’ that enabled Glauber to improvise his lines, the idea to have him stand at the crossroad and riff on the ‘cinema do Terceiro Mundo’ is mine; and this impossibility to meet for the Tropicalists of the Third World and the conceptualists of the First in quest of a revolution of the medium marked by Isabel’s three hesitant steps in the direction indicated by Glauber and her return to the path she came from, I articulated it...”

in itself a political act – are more experimentally interesting. They are what the cinema may consider as being a threshold situation, in as much as that they are still considered to be films and that they make use of the basic cinematographic apparatus: film, projector, screen, seat, dark room, tickets to enter, traditional cinematographic time. However, what one sees on the screen is much closer to that which today is frequently seen in museums in a shorter time frame: the so called installations, that were more often seen in video and today are made with digital material. There are several films within each individual film, made according to the availability of low cost material, creating images of images recycled within the films themselves. There is nothing more “pop” than the impressions of sunlight on the dark screen, the cards with handwritten schemes, the red frames and the strips of film in *Vent d’Est*. The economical material movement of the cinema and the plastic arts are opposite. While cinema has high costs and is sold at low prices, the plastic arts generally cost very little and are sold at high prices. In this sense, the films made by the Group follow contemporary art in using as much everyday material as possible, instead of proposing the careful finishing that is demanded with increasing intensity by the modern film industry. Kent Jones, in an article published in this catalogue, uses Gorin’s metaphor of the “can-opener” (“We made this film in the same way that you would make a can-opener”) to describe the process used to make these films. To make a film like a can-opener is to lend it the power to serve as an instrument for opening something that is hermetically sealed, such as the image of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. If thought of as being a “pop” artefact, the films are not content to simply present the new culture or reveal the reality of consumption. Even cans of Campbell’s soup need to be opened.

In interviews made in the days of the Group, generally represented by Godard and Gorin, several questions were asked with regard to the audience for which the films were made. The duo demonstrated a true concern for this issue when they made *Tout va bien*. Despite the presence of famous actors or of the care taken in the finishing, the film was not a public success, and neither was it well received by the critics. Seeing it today, this preoccupation becomes senseless and we are grateful for its existence. Without wishing to say that the film has finally reached its audience, or that the works of the Dziga Vertov Group have now found a public, it would be good if, when considering the policies of support and funding for films, it would also be possible to argue in the sense of the paradigmatic axis and ask: how many generations will watch these films?



Both *One Plus One* and *One A.M.* were financed for cinema release and, despite their formal experimentation and wearying political content, it is possible to imagine them as theatrical films. It is impossible, however, to imagine the next five films that Godard was to make outside the classroom or the political meeting – and yet they were, with one exception, made for a television audience.

The production story in each case was similar. A European television station commissions the great film-maker to make a documentary on some current aspect of politics and then refuses to show the subsequent film for technical reasons. All the films are in some simple sense unwatchable – the premise of each is that the image is unable to provide the knowledge that it claims; that the camera is not a neutral recorder of reality but an essential element in the reality that is being represented. They constantly demonstrate the reality of the camera, most importantly through an emphasis on the sound, which does not work merely as the invisible complement to the image, but as an autonomous element.

The films have been classified by Jean-Pierre Gorin as UVOs, Unidentified Visual Objects, and this description is not a bad one. It is difficult to think of a parallel in film history. No other mainstream director has chosen to use five commercial budgets to make experiments in sound and image, and no experimental director has made five films which are still recognizably within the genre of “current affairs” documentary. Godard himself says that they are not “movies”, but admits that they have “some interesting moves in them”. Considered as conventional documentaries they are unwatchable; considered as experiments in sound and image they contain lessons even more relevant today than when they were made.

In Godard: a portrait of the artist at Seventy
The Dziga Vertov Group
Colin MacCabe ©

The first of the films was made in Britain and its aesthetic programme was announced on the title card, where, after the word "British", the word "Images" is crossed out to be replaced by "Sounds". The film is composed of six long sequences: a car production line, a naked woman walking around a house, a right-wing denunciation of immigration, workers discussing capitalism, Essex students trying to produce radical lyrics for a Beatles song, and a bloody hand reaching for a red flag. Sound and image are never held in conventional relations.

As we track interminably down the car production line, we hear sequences from *The Communist Manifesto*, but they are almost drowned out by the wall of sound produced by the production line as it grinds away. The naked woman walks around the house in total silence, while one of the earliest British feminist texts by Sheila Rowbotham is read out on the soundtrack. Unlike the first sequence, there is a moment where text can be understood as describing the image, but then the woman picks up a phone and starts repeating some of Rowbotham's words in strange counterpoint to the voice-over. The neo-fascist speaker addresses the camera in television's classic form of direct address, but is impossible to read sound and image together, partly because of the shock of hearing racism being articulated from a position of liberal authority and partly because the images of Britain, which punctuate his speech in the classic form of the news report, do not "illustrate" what he is saying. The political conversation of workers from the Cowley car plant at Oxford never marries sound and image; the camera does not focus on who is speaking, only on the listeners. While the sequence with Essex students does contain shot of individuals speaking, the camera records the group searching for the right sounds that will turn a Beatles track into a revolutionary song. But still the film does not provide the beginning or end that would place the students' efforts in a "comprehensible" context. It is only the final sequence which suggests sound and image in concert, as a bleeding arm inches across the snow to grasp a red flag while a medley of revolutionary songs make up the soundtrack.

British Sounds was produced by Kestrel Productions, a company set up by Tony Garnett and other left-wing film-makers to take advantage of the franchise round which British television had just transformed. Mo Teitelbaum, the wife of one of the partners, Irving Teitelbaum, had come up with the idea that Kestrel should get six European directors to make documentaries on Britain. She knew Godard from May 1968, when Gérard Fromanger had introduced them, and Godard saw her in London when he was making *One Plus One*. When she put the idea to him, Godard agreed on the proviso that she would be his assistant, and also that the film would be made in a different way from a conventional production.

The Teitelbaums thus found their small St. John's Wood house functioning as production office and as location for two of the sequences, and they found themselves running a hotel for the revolution¹. Godard had brought with him a young Maoist student called Jean-Henri Roger in order, as he explained to his hosts, that the film could be made "democratically". Mo Teitelbaum was amazed at how much Godard seemed to want to impress his revolutionary credentials on this young man. Roger had all but adopted Godard and Wiazemsky since the May events, which had not been to Anne Wiazemsky's taste – she was not overjoyed to be treated as an adoptive mother by someone of her own age, nor to have Roger constantly living in their apartment². But for her all this was part and parcel of Godard's great need to kow-tow to the young.

Relations on the production were difficult. The cameraman, Charles Stewart, had a handlebar moustache and wore tweed jackets, and the Teitelbaums believe that Godard felt almost obliged to provoke arguments with someone of such bourgeois appearance. In addition, there was the usual problem that Godard was very unwilling to explain what he wanted. In Irving Teitelbaum's words, "It was all in his head, but if you weren't in his head then that was your fault". Some of the discussions were more amusing. The Teitelbaums were members of a Trotskyite grouping, and when Godard met its leading figure, Gerry Healey, Healey informed him that he was "in the business of crushing business". "Oh", said Godard, "so you're in business to". This brought the Maoist/Trotskyite *rap-prochement* to a very swift conclusion.

For Mo Teitelbaum, the shoot was dominated by "frustration and despair that 1968 had fizzled out in France, and a desperate desire to recreate and refind it". When they went up to Essex, then held to be one of the revolutionary universities, Godard was "horrified at how well-behaved the students were". Some political-active students were quickly rustled up, but Godard's disappointment was so great and so visible that Mo Teitelbaum even wonders if the fact that some of

[1] In addition to Godard and Roger, there were various visitors from Paris including Daniel Cohn-Bendit and his girlfriend.

[2] Roger himself says that the situation was more complicated, and that he and Wiazemsky often shared jokes at the expense of P  p   (Granddad) Godard. There can be no doubting the strength of the attachment that had linked the turbulent young Maoist to the idle-aged film-maker. Roger married Juliet Berto, who was to die tragically young in 1990. Grief-stricken, Roger decided to abandon both France and film-making for the West Indies. Godard rang him and invited him down to Rolle in an effort to dissuade him. Roger spent two days in Switzerland during which Godard didn't say a word. When Godard dropped Roger at the train station, he told him, "You see – you can't go to the West Indies because that will leave me with no one to talk to".

those filmed subsequently set up the Angry Brigade, Britain's only terrorist grouping, can be traced to the emotions of that day.

The film got its fifteen minutes in the media because of the long sequence where a naked woman walks through a house. Although there is absolutely no erotic or pornographic context, London Weekend Television, from whom Kestrel was making the programme, refused to show it. Godard's idea for the sequence came when Mo Teitelbaum pointed out to him an article by Rowbotham in the leftist journal *Black Dwarf*. It was one of the first texts of Women's Liberation in England, and Godard immediately decided to include it in his film. Sheila Rowbotham records her meeting with Godard in her memoir of the 1960's:

His idea was to film me with nothing on reciting words of emancipation as I walked up and down a flight of stairs – the supposition being that eventually the voice would override the images of the body. This made me uneasy for two reasons. I was a 36C and considered my breasts too floppy for the sixties fashion. Being photographed lying down with nothing on was fine, but walking downstairs could be embarrassing. Moreover, while I didn't think nudity was a problem in itself, the early women's groups were against what we called "objectification" ... Why on earth did the pesky male mind jump so quickly from talk of liberation to nudity, I wondered. ...

Godard came out to Hackney to convince me. He sat on the sanded floor of my bedroom, a slight dark man, his body coiled in persuasive knots. Neither Godard the man nor Godard the mythical creator of *Breathless* were easy to contend with. I perched in discomfort on the end of my bed and announced, "I think if there's a woman with nothing on appearing on the screen no one's going listen to any words", suggesting perhaps he could film our "This Exploits Women" stickers on the tube. Godard gave me a baleful look, his lip curled. "Don't you think I am able to make a cunt boring?", he exclaimed³. We were locked in a conflict over fleeting ethnographic moment.

In the end a compromise was settled. The Electric Cinema had recently opened in Notting Hill and needed money. A young woman (with small breasts) from there agreed to walk up and down the stairs and I did the voice over. When *British Sounds* was shown in France... the audience

³ Godard says that he never used this phrase.

cheered as I declared, “They tell us what we are... One is simply not conscious of ‘men’ writers, of ‘men’ film-makers. They are just ‘writers’, just ‘film-makers’. The reflected image for women they create will be taken straight by women themselves. These characters ‘are’ women”. As for Godard’s intention for making a cunt boring, I cannot say except that a friend in International Socialism told me that his first thought had been “crumpet” – until the shot went on and on and on, and he started to listen⁴.

The film’s ending, in which the will to revolution triumphs as a bleeding arm struggles across snowy ground to reach a red flag, was shot in the Teitelbaums’ garden. When it was suggested that the arm should be bleeding, Teitelbaum said he would pop down to the Kestrel offices where there was a bottle of fake blood. Godard told him not to bother and cut his own arm to provide the colour for the final scene.

Godard shot his next film in Czechoslovakia, almost immediately after leaving Britain. The commission came from West German television, who asked for a documentary on Czechoslovakia six months on from the Russian invasion of August 1968. Once again Godard was accompanied by Jean-Henri Roger, but this time they were joined by Paul Bourron, the cameraman Godard had wanted to shoot *British Sounds*. The film is called *Pravda*, both the Russian for truth and the title of the official Soviet newspaper. It is even more explicit than *British Sounds* in its refusal of standard documentary conventions and in its scepticism of finding any truth in the image. Its attack on all ideologies of vision is much more explicit than in Godard’s previous film, where the long sequences do carry a considerable truth content. (Indeed it would be possible to see *British Sounds* as a more successful remake of *One Plus One*.) *Pravda* refuses any such luxuries.

The opening shots of Czechoslovakia are accompanied by a semi-sarcastic commentary which emphasises the “revisionism” of Czech society. The “direct cinema” of *British Sounds* has been replaced by a conventional television documentary form with a relation between sound and image, even if that sound – “Many workers would rather wash their cars than fuck their wives” – falls outside television norms. But this opening section is then dismissed as a mere “travelogue”. The film then begins to develop its rational analysis of the political situation, while at the same time tearing apart the normal relations between sound and image which inform television documentaries.

⁴ Sheila ROWBOTHAM, *Promise of a Dream: Remembering the Sixties*. London: Penguin, 2000, pp. 220-221.

As the camera moves in on a conversation between Czech workers, instead of the inevitable voice-over translation we are told, “If you don’t know Czech then you’d better learn it fast”. Similarly, a discussion of the peasantry is accompanied by an image of peasants loading hay as the camera zooms in and out. The zoom signifies conventionally that we are getting closer to reality, but there is a complete dislocation between the commentary and the zoom, so that we become aware of the zoom merely as an alteration of distance to the object being filmed, and the alteration provides us with no real knowledge.

At one level, the problems of the film are the problems of the contorted Maoist line on Czechoslovakia – which was against the Russian invasion, but even more against the Czech liberalisation that had preceded it, both being examples of the deadly sin of “revisionism”. But it is those problems which allow a hilarious deconstruction of the conventions of television documentary, a savage attack on the tenet “seeing is believing”.

While Godard was editing these films, he spent a considerable amount of time discussing them with another young Maoist, Jean-Pierre Gorin. Gorin did not go on the shoots or the editing rooms because he was laid up in hospital after a serious motorbike accident. But he had been talking to Godard about cinema for more than two years. They had first met at a dinner party given by Yvonne Baby, the film critic of *Le Monde*, while Godard was making *La Chinoise*. Gorin had just started work on the book pages of *Le Monde*. He was 23, and by every account both brilliant and charming. Although he had failed to get into the Ecole Normale Supérieure, his time attending the preparatory classes at Louis le Grand meant that he was deeply engaged in the new thinking, be it Althusserian Marxism or literary Structuralism.

For Godard he appeared to be someone “better than me in thinking and philosophy”. At the end of the evening at Baby’s, Godard said to Gorin that they should meet and talk again. They did, and on one of those occasions Godard astonished Gorin by showing him not only *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle* but also a trailer that he had cut for Bresson’s film *Mouchette*, a trailer that was, says Gorin, both “pure Godard and pure Bresson”.

Gorin, like many of the young leftists of that time, was absolutely passionate about the cinema. The cinephilia of the post-war years was still a reality; the Latin Quarter housed a huge number of repertory cinemas and in addition there was the new *Cahiers* of Rivette’s editorship. For Gorin, *Cahiers* linked high and low culture together in an innovative conjunction – it was the “new paradigm”. Gorin’s association with Godard became much closer when he was fired from *Le Monde* at the beginning of 1968 because he was unable to write up an assignment on Cuba, and asked Godard for a job. At that time Godard was working on a project to make 24 hours

of films, two of which he planned to do himself, with the rest to be farmed out. Godard suggested that Gorin could make one of the films: "I'll pay you by the week". Gorin was terrified by the sums of money involved and lost his nerve. Rather than be paid by the week he went off to write a whole script, but when he returned with it, he found that the project had collapsed in a welter of recriminations.

Despite this their conversations continued, and by the time Godard was to go to Italy to shoot his next film, *Vent d'est* (Wind from the East), starring Anne Wiazemsky and Gian Maria Volonté, he was insistent that Gorin should accompany him. The doctors were adamant that Gorin should stay. Gorin's solution was to send Raphaël Sorin in his stead. Sorin was one of Gorin's closest friends; they had attended Lous le Grand together, where the fact that they both had Jewish mothers was a very strong bond, and they had talked of setting up a film-making collective. Sorin's memories of the shoot of *Vent d'est* make it sound like a comic nightmare in which the collective delusions of 1968 were distilled into their purest form.

The money was provided by a radical Italian millionaire and seems to have been of dubious provenance – certainly Sorin remembers ferrying huge quantities of cash from France to Italy. There were many rumours about where the *Vent d'est* money was finally distributed in this radical fashion – perhaps the most charming is that it was used to set up a transsexual bar in Milan. But more disastrously, the film was to be run "democratically", in other words, by mass meeting (*assemblée générale*). If there was one unifying theme of the student movement of the late 1960's, it was the distrust of any representative bodies. Lenin's slogan, "All power to the Soviets", had been little more than a strategy to destroy the institutions of representative democracy, but in the student movements after 1968, a belief in direct democracy determined that all decisions had to be made in vast unwieldy mass meetings. In the initial moment of "free speech" in Berkeley or in the days of the barricades in Paris, the mass meeting may have been an exciting and liberating innovation, but it very quickly turned into a repetitive and unmanageable forum open to all kind of opportunism and to a perpetual "more leftist than thou" form of a moral blackmail.

Anne Wiazemsky, who remained constantly sceptical of the wilder revolutionary rhetoric, had little faith that the film could be made in this fashion. Meeting after meeting opposed the anarchists, led by Cohn-Bendit, the media "face" of 1968, to the Maoists. Whatever their disbelief in institutions of representative democracy, the anarchists did not have a problem with representation as such; they wanted a left-wing Western which would be able to represent the class struggle in the most popular of genres. The Maoists, schooled in Althusser and Brecht, wanted none of this. In words from *British Sounds*, "If you make a million prints of a Marxist-Leninist film

then you get *Gone with the Wind*. There could be no question of using the standard form of narrative, of allowing sound and image to become comprehensible for an unknown audience. They could only make a militant film which would act as a blackboard for a militant audience – a starting point for thought.

The impasse was resolved when Godard summoned Gorin. He telephoned the Paris hospital and told Gorin, “Either you come and do the film with me or I stop the film. There’s a prepaid ticket waiting for you at Alitalia”. Gorin’s doctors tried to stop him from leaving, but he made it to Rome. In Rome, he stayed in the same hotel as Godard and was thus in a privileged position during the last chaotic weeks of shooting. It was at this point that the relationship between Godard and Gorin entered its most productive and intense phase, which would last until 1973 and would see them produce five movies together: *Vent d’est*, *Lotte in Italia* (Struggles in Italy), *Vladimir et Rosa*, *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*.

On *Vent d’est* they were to prevail together in what Wiazemsky calls a “putsch”,⁵ after which Wiazemsky’s initial scepticism became even more pronounced. All that is left of Cohn-Bendit’s Western, which was to have had a mining strike as its narrative focus, are some fragments of narrative on the soundtrack in the opening section. Instead of representing a particular strike in particular images, the film asks what it would be to represent any strike. Perhaps the key sequence in the film is a mass meeting, not of striking miners but of the film crew lying around discussing whether an image of Stalin should be used in the film. The second voice of the soundtrack (and *Vent d’est* makes the sound even more dominant than *British Sounds* or *Pravda*) states that just as mass meetings must be analysed in terms of their specific circumstances – who are they for and who are they against –, images must be analysed in similar fashion. The image of Stalin is used by capitalists to represent repression, but from a revolutionary point of view it is a repressive image in so far as it prevents a proper analysis of Stalin as a political phenomenon. *Vent d’est* is the most experimental of the series of Maoist films; it is the most coherent in its application of Althusserian politics.

The six or seven months which followed, first in Rome and then in Paris, were an intense period of discussion and experimentation. For Gorin, Godard was someone who had acted as a seismograph; he had predicted the earthquake of 1968, but now the earthquake had happened and he had to reinvent himself. As a consequence, he

15) Godard and Gorin give a similar description in an American interview. Gorin – “What happened was that the two Marxists really willing to do the film took power, and...”, Godard – “All the anarchists went to the beach”. Michael GOODWIN, Tom LUDDY and Naomi WISE, op. cit.

was open to ideas and to a young man who was full of ideas. In talking of his collaboration with Gorin, and Gorin's superior grasp of contemporary theory, Godard talks in terms of sound ("I was not aware of what had been recorded"), for it is sound which is at the centre of these experimental films. For Gorin, the focus on sound had many determinants – economic, political and technological.

The late sixties was a time when sound technology was in rapid development, in particular the ability to mix more than one channel into a track. Politically, there was the desire to reverse the general disdain for sound, a disdain reflected in the way that the sound recordist was always paid much less than a director of photography. There was also a genuine pleasure in didacticism. Economically, it was much easier to experiment with the sound than with the image. All this combined to place the emphasis on the editing and the sound rather than the shooting and the image, an emphasis that Godard was to retain when he returned to more conventional film-making. For Godard, the distrust of the image had a more personal component. He associates *Vent d'est* with the end of his relationship with Wiazemsky. The difference in age, and the same jealousy⁶ that plagued his marriage with Karina, were significant factors, but the problem was also that both women had come to him as images – they were creations from the screen, not real women. In fact, Godard was not to move out of the flat in the rue Saint-Jacques (into which they had moved three days before the first of the May 1968 riots) until the editing of *Jusqu'à la victoire* (Until Victory), but the making of *Vent d'est* seems to be an agreed watershed.

So enthusiastic was Godard about the collaboration with Gorin that they decided to sign *Vent d'est* with the collective name of the Dziga Vertov Group. Gorin had first mentioned the idea of a Dziga Vertov collective to Raphaël Sorin in early 1968, when Godard had asked him to write a script for the ill-fated twenty-four-hour project. Dziga Vertov was a Soviet film-maker of the revolutionary period whose work emphasized both editing and the importance of the current class struggle⁷. At one level, the choice of Vertov was a deliberate provocation. Didn't everyone know that Eisenstein was the great revolutionary film-maker? In 1969 the provocation was pronounced; Vertov was much less of a canonical figure then than he is now. But there were both political and aesthetic reasons for choosing

¹⁶ | For Wiazemsky, Godard's obsessive jealousy was the major cause of the marriage's breakdown.

¹⁷ | See Georges SADOUL, preface from Jean Rouch, *Dziga Vertov*. Paris: Editions Champs Libres, 1971. Annette MICHELSON (ed.) *Kino-eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984. Vlada PETRIC, *Constructivism in Film: The Man with a Movie Camera*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Vertov. Politically, it enabled the condemnation of Eisenstein for his decision in 1924 to make a historical film about the Potemkin rather to concentrate on the class struggle. This fitted the Althusserian line that the Soviet revolution had only gone wrong in the mid-twenties. More importantly, the aesthetic distinction was between Eisenstein's notion of montage as primarily an editing process and the practice of Godard and Gorin, for whom the juxtaposition of disparate elements was necessary at every stage of the shooting, from the choosing of the material to be filmed to the filming, as well as in the so-called editing.

The idea of a collective was itself no unusual. The late 1960's and early 1970's saw attempts all over the West and at every level, from the domestic to the professional, to set up forms of organisation which were not based on the individual. The desire for such forms was broadly political, and the result of a disgust with the individualism of the West; their general catastrophic failure is a crucial element in the current inability to conceive of social relations except in their hyperindividualised form. To analyse either the desire or the failure in general is well beyond the scope of this book. But, for Gorin, the idea of a collective had been in the air for as long as he had been politically conscious, and both Chris Marker's collective *Slon* and Deleuze and Guattari's collaboration offered contemporary models.

There was also a specific resonance within film – an attack on the very idea of an author. At the same time as *Cahiers* had been promoting the idea of the author, Structuralism had been busy attacking it, and in 1967 both Barthes and Foucault published famous essays intending to displace the notion of the author as an autonomous individual consciousness. Barthes argued that the concept obscured the codes and the languages which a writer used and which he did not create. Foucault stressed that to talk of an unchanging author obscured the practices (legal, commercial etc.) which defined the changing notion of an author.

However accurate these attacks were on literary concept of the author inherited from the Romantics, much of the force was lost on *Cahiers*. *Cahiers* were the first to produce a theory of the author from the position of the audience, and as a result they stressed the specific codes of film (indeed it was through the codes that one found an author) and the legal and commercial practices that placed authors in relation to conditions of production and distribution. From another perspective, *Cahiers'* emphasis on the author did glorify the individual in traditional Romantic terms, and if the Romantics had glorified the author at the expense of the reader, *Cahiers* added insult to injury by neglecting everybody else who worked on a film.

The question of how decisions are taken on a set was one that, according to Claude Nedjar, obsessed Godard from the mid-sixties on, and for Nedjar the excitement

of the Dziga Vertov group was that, for once, the decisions were not vested in a single individual⁸. In an interview that he gave to Mike Dibb in 1968 while shooting the *Eve Democracy* sequence for *One Plus One*, Godard makes clear how much he dislikes the director making all the decisions in a “fascist” manner. The Utopian ideal is that all fifty members of the crew must participate. For Godard, this Utopian ideal is not abandoned until the early eighties and the experiences of *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen*. What is never abandoned is the idea of collaboration. In retrospect, for Godard, collaboration was the key to the New Wave, and with Gorin he found someone whose desire to collaborate was as great as his own.

The great problem confronting the collaboration, a problem that Gorin characterises in terms of “anguish”, was that of the audience. The enormous weakness of the Dziga Vertov position was that it assumed that a revolutionary politics would provide another audience. One could criticise the audience of *Gone with the Wind* for accepting a false unity of sound and image, but this criticism depended on the possibility of another audience, a militant audience for whom the screen would be a blackboard and the soundtrack merely the beginning of a conversation. In fact, when Godard and Gorin made a film which genuinely tried to address student militants, not only did the commissioning broadcaster refuse to show it – on the by now predictable grounds that it was not political enough –, it also failed to find any political audience whatsoever. The title *Lotte in Italia* may summon up images of students and workers clashing with police but, for the Dziga Vertov group, the struggle is always the struggle between sound and image. More than 30 years later, it still amuses Gorin that the film was shot almost entirely in Paris, because the whole thrust of its analysis is that it is impossible to “see” a social situation. If the young Italian student who is the protagonist of the film is to become a revolutionary, it is through repetitively working through a very small number of images until by reflecting on them she understands how her subjectivity is constituted by the class struggle⁹.

The film is easily the most politically and theoretically coherent work of the Dziga Vertov Group, at least in part because it is almost entirely based on Althusser’s own

⁸ Christine Aya, who worked as editor on all the Dziga Vertov material, stresses the joyful nature of the collaborative work.

⁹ For a more extended analysis of *Lotte in Italia* and the other Dziga Vertov films, see Colin MACCABE et al., op. cit., chs. 3-5.

reaction to May 1968 in his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”¹⁰. Althusser came with his wife to see the film in the editing room at the rue de Rennes and, according to Gorin, wept.

However moved Althusser was, he hardly constituted a large audience. The only place that such an audience could be found was on American campuses. When Godard toured with *La Chinoise* in 1968, his trip had included a stop at the Pacific Film Archive, where the curator Tom Luddy had organised a full retrospective. Luddy had been a student at Berkeley, itself the epicentre of the anti-war movement, and was associated with the Maoist Progressive Labour Party. He accompanied Godard to Los Angeles, where King Vidor, Jean Renoir and Fritz Lang were present at a screening of *La Chinoise*, and they went to a Free Huey Newton rally at Oakland jail¹¹.

Luddy became Godard’s American connection, and it was he who organised the first of a series of Dziga Vertov tours in the spring of 1970. There was a financial rationale to this. The television commissions were not lucrative, and the \$ 1,000-a-venue speaking fee that Luddy arranged was a significant addition to Dziga Vertov funds. For Gorin, at least, it satisfied a desperate need for an audience. As one reads the accounts of Godard and Gorin’s visits in the underground press of the day, it can hardly be said that the audience was all that appreciative, but an audience it was, and one which certainly claimed a shared radicalism.

America provided a partial answer to the problem of the audience, but a much more satisfactory solution, as the revolutionary tide ebbed in both the United States and France, was to film a real revolution. The 1967 Arab/Israeli war had violently radicalised the Palestinians. After two decades of waiting for the Arab states to solve their problems, the Palestinians found themselves without the Left Bank of the Jordan, which had been occupied by the Israelis. A whole range of revolutionary factions sprang up in Jordan and began to create a state within a state.

Godard and Gorin agreed to a request from the Arab League to make a film about the Palestinian situation, and in early 1970 they spent considerable time in Jordan, with Godard often flying back to France to see Wiazemsky. For the Dziga Vertov

† 10 † “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster. London: New Left Books, 1971, pp. 121-173. The essay was written at the beginning of 1969 and first published in French in April 1970. Gorin read it soon after it was written and before shooting *Lotte* in Italy in December 1969. The great majority of the film was shot in Godard and Wiazemsky rue Saint-Jacques flat, although there were some shots of Rome and Milan picked up on a wind-up Bolex.

† 11 † Godard was immediately fascinated by the Black Panthers. Almost all his letters and telegrams to Luddy over the next two years include requests for Panther material and this material is immediately reflected in *One Plus One*.

group, there could be no question of just “finding images”, the mistake of *British Sounds* and *Pravda*; the crucial effort was to “build” them, to practise montage before shooting. But these efforts were hampered by the fact that neither Godard nor Gorin spoke Arabic. They found themselves time and time again listening to a long and complicated speech, only for the interpreter to translate it in five words: “We will struggle until victory”.

Eventually, *Jusqu'à la victoire* became the title of the film, but before they could complete the editing, the money from the Arab League ran out and they had to accept a commission from German television to make a film on the Chicago conspiracy trial, when, following the riots at the Democratic Convention of 1968, an array of radicals were put on trial on trumped-up charges. In interviews on American campuses at that time, Godard and Gorin make clear that they had little interest in *Vladimir et Rosa*, as they entitled it, except as a way of paying for the Palestinian film, and this attitude comes across in what is clearly the least interesting of the Dziga Vertov experiments.

But if *Vladimir et Rosa* was a hastily assembled mess, a much worse fate awaited *Jusqu'à la victoire*. As Godard and Gorin filmed and edited, the political situation grew more and more volatile, with many Palestinian voices calling for a revolutionary overthrow of King Hussein and the seizing of the Jordanians state as a prelude to a generalised war on Israel. Indeed, so volatile was the situation that Godard had asked Claude Nedjar, who was now acting as producer for all the Dziga Vertov films, to provide an armoured door to the editing room. By this time Godard had moved out of the flat in the rue Saint-Jacques and was sleeping in the editing room. This very immediate conjunction of life and work, like many other elements of the Dziga Vertov period, was to bear fruit later. In retrospect, Godard saw it as a kind of imitation of his father's clinic¹². Events in Jordan moved very quickly. In the autumn Hussein launched a pre-emptive strike against the Palestinian revolution, and many Palestinians died in a month which still bears the name Black September. The victory of the revolution had turned into the bitterest of defeats.

By now much of the initial enthusiasm of *Vent d'est* had worn off. There was a desire on both Godard and Gorin's part to add to the group, and efforts were made with Gérard Martin and Nathalie Biard, Gorin's former lover, to increase the active participation of the group, but these were unsuccessful¹³. Ultimately, in a

† 12 † Interview, Jean-Luc Godard, December 1988.

† 13 † The Dziga Vertov Group did not issue membership cards, but the following names are associated with it at one time or another: Paul Bourron, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Armand Marco, Gérard Martin, Isabelle Pons, Jean-Henri-Roger, Raphaël Sorin, Anne Wiazemsky, Bourron and Marco were cameramen. Whether the women really participated in the group is debatable. Claude Nedjar often acted as producer for the group.

state of some disillusionment, they decided to make a mainstream film.

One of the major emphases of the Dziga Vertov Group was the primacy of production, but their films had been unseen; now they would make a film which would be distributed. In the early part of 1971, together with the help of the charismatic producer Jean-Pierre Rassam, they put together a film, *Tout va bien*, financed by Gaumont, which would consider the class struggle in France four years on from 1968. Yves Montand, one of the great stars of French cinema, was cast together with Jane Fonda, then at the highest point of her career¹⁴. Both were known left-wing activists. Such was the power of Godard's name and so attractive the prospect of making a mainstream political film with him that they both agreed to work for no fee upfront and a share of the profits.

There was also an American end to the deal, and on 9 June 1971, Godard and Gorin were due to fly to New York to sign contracts with Frank Yablans of Paramount. They met at the rue de Rennes, where Gorin discovered that he'd left his passport at home. They agreed to meet at the airport, but first Godard wanted to go to a bookstore and buy *Meti* – a text of Brecht's. Christine Aya, the editor who was working with them at the time, offered to give Godard a ride on her motorbike. "Don't do that", joked Gorin, "you'll have an accident." At the bottom of the rue de Rennes, a turning bus trapped both the bike and Godard under its front wheel. Godard's pelvis was broken, his skull fractured, and his body lacerated. On the first night in the hospital Gorin was told that he was certain to die. It took six days for him to recover consciousness, and Godard was to be in and out of the hospital for more than two years. The editor was also badly injured. For Godard it was "the logical end of 1968".

But there was still unfinished business. Most important for Gorin was the question of Godard's medical insurance. Rassam had telephoned him to say that Jane Fonda was backing out: "She has evolved and doesn't want to work with men". If she pulled out the film would collapse, and Godard would not be covered. Gorin flew to see her and persuaded her to stay in the film. By December, although still under treatment and with further stays in hospital ahead of him, Godard was ready to start shooting. The plot of *Tout va bien* is simple: a couple – he is a film director, she a radio reporter – go to visit a factory as part of her assignment to file a report on the current state of

¹⁴ She was to win an Oscar in the following year (1972) for *Klute* (dir. Alan Pakula).

France. While there, they become involved in a factory occupation and are imprisoned with the boss in his own office. Such “sequestrations” were a favourite gauchiste tactic after 1968. The effect of the visit induces the couple to reflect on their own lives historically and the film ends by generalising their discovery for the whole of France.

The structure of the film is in some ways similar to *Vent d'est* and *Lotte in Italia*, but the content is fiction, however distanced. The presiding genius of the film is not Althusser, but Brecht. We are aware of the camera, always fixed or deliberately travelling, with no pans or zooms; we are aware of the staging – the factory looks like a set; and we are aware of the actors, of both Montand and Fonda as characters, but characters not very far from their public personae. The film constantly demonstrates the conditions of its own production, not least in the opening credit scene where the cost of each element is written out from a steadily diminishing cheque book. The Dziga Vertov determination to edit before shooting meant that the workers in the factory were young unemployed actors. Godard and Gorin felt that if they used workers, they would be so overawed by stars that the film would not portray any of the proletarian/bourgeois friction and resentment that was to animate the central scene. Put unknown actors with stars, though, and the camera would have something to record.

Thirty years on the film wears well. The Brechtian devices actually succeed – providing both distance and engagement –, and the film provides a very accurate picture of the dissatisfactions of work, both in factory production and in the audiovisual media. The problem, however, remains the politics. Where Maoist class struggle and Althusserian ideology have failed, the film offers a final sequence in which gauchistes ransack a supermarket (another favourite contemporary tactic). In many ways, the film functions as an elegy for a historical moment, but it lacks the courage of its own insights, which would involve a much more radical critique of gauchiste politics.

In between the editing of the film and its release, a young Maoist militant, Pierre Overney, was shot dead outside a Renault factory. His funeral became the last great demonstration of May. Godard told Gorin that this was the audience for their movie, if only they could find a way to reach them. But Althusser remarked, perhaps with more prescience, that the mourners were there “to bury gauchisme”¹⁵. *Tout va bien* never managed to decide whether

15 | Louis Althusser, *L'Avenir dure longtemps*. Paris: Stock/IMEC, 1992, p. 225. In *Le fond de l'air est rouge*, Chris Marker describes Overney's funeral as “the last parade”.

it was there to bury or to praise, and its ending glorifies the violence, which was one of the most unappealing features of gauchisme. Indeed, as late as 1980 Godard was to say, “Even now the terrorists are still for me the inheritors.”¹⁶

The shoot of *Tout va bien* was an unhappy one, and on its release it was a critical and commercial disaster. As if to complete a woeful circle, Godard and Gorin’s next film, *Letter to Jane*, was a vicious attack on their recent star. The film is composed of single still – a photograph of Jane Fonda in North Vietnam. The commentary, the “Letter to Jane”, analyses the photograph in terms of the contemporary media’s representation of the world. It also analyses the photograph in terms of film history – the way in which Fonda’s expression, which resembles that of her own father Henry, is the acting equivalent of the New Deal: benign liberal concern.

For Gorin, the film is still one of the few examples of a study of the history of film-acting, and he defends the brilliance of the analysis. But at the time it was perceived as a vicious attack by two men on a woman who was given no chance to respond. Thirty years on, it seems to confirm what Anne Wiazemsky remembers as the “misogyny” of the Dziga Vertov Group. Godard talked directly about the group’s relation to women in an American interview:

The basis for *Struggles in Italy* was our attempt to organise our personal lives with our wives. We had problems as individuals, but these related to the general problem. So we deliberately chose a subject which was strongly related to our ideology, because even when you speak to a woman you are in love with, or the woman speaks to you, this is ideology.

We tried, and it was a complete failure, because we finished the movie alone, and our wives thought of it, at that time, as only our work – you know, “this is your job. I have my job too, and this is your job”. We tried to make the movie in order to raise the problem – not to solve it, but just

¹⁶ Colin MACCABE, op. cit., p. 75. Although there are no accounts of Godard or Gorin actively contemplating terrorism, Sorin tells a hilarious and frightening story of Bourron wanting to make a bomb during the shooting of *Vent d’est*. Sorin suggested that he make a “very small one”. It was still enough to destroy the hotel bathroom where they were staying. Godard regards the story as a legend.

to raise it – to say, “This is our job from a technical point of view, yeah, but from a more general point of view it’s our life”. Trying to work with our wives on movies, when they are not especially interested in movies, was correct at that moment¹⁷.

The stills photographer on *Tout va bien* was a young Swiss woman, Anne-Marie Miéville (credited under her married name of Anne-Marie Michel), whom Godard had first met in 1970. Their relationship had intensified during his period in and out of hospital after the motorcycle accident, and Godard was now keen to find ways in which to achieve the idea of a real studio, one which would include both Miéville and Gorin. The revolution was over, and the discussions were about what kind of company structure was needed to realise their film-making ambitions. Gorin confesses that these business discussions bored him, but they ended with the setting up of a company, *Tout Va Assez Bien* (Everything is just about OK), of which he was the legal representative.

The company had two initial projects, a film by him with the title *Ailleurs immédiat* (Elsewhere Immediately), and one by Godard entitled *Moi, Je* (I, Myself). The final injunction of *Tout va bien* was “to think oneself historically”, and both films were attempts to do this, but with questions of subjectivity and sexuality now woven deeply into questions of politics and history. Gorin’s title came from Georges Bataille, the great theorist of the erotic who had died at the beginning of the sixties, but whose thought had been crucial for Foucault, for Derrida, for Barthes and for the magazine *Tel Quel*. *Ailleurs immédiat* was the first TVAB film to go into production.

Film sets are notorious for their sexual chaos. *Ailleurs immédiat*, with eroticism as its topic and with Gorin playing the lead as well as directing, was always likely to set chaotic records. The lead actress, who had been having an affair with Gorin, switched her affections to another woman in the cast, and when both women decided that the director was behaving in a sexist manner, the shoot exploded.¹⁸ Gorin fled to California, where Tom Luddy was to look after him and find him a job, and the Dziga Vertov Group was history.

It’s difficult to find a Maoist in the 21st century. Once the Great Helmsman was dead, the dreadful realities of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution

↑ 17 ↑ Michael GOODWIN, Tom LUDDY and Naomi WISE, op. cit.

↑ 18 ↑ Isabelle Pons, Interview March 2002.

slowly began to emerge. When China and Vietnam went to war at the end of the seventies, Marxist-Leninism became a historical term. To complete the picture, Mao's doctor published a memoir⁹ that made clear the truth of Lord Acton's dictum, "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". But if one thinks of Mao's great slogan that one must count on one's own forces, if one thinks of the Maoist emphasis on refusing the divorce between intellectual work and manual work, or on the need to find a different balance between the country and the city, one might argue that Godard's life since 1968 shows that however few of Mao's texts he read, he read them with great attention. And there was perhaps an even more enduring legacy. French Maoism had defined itself as a "New Resistance", arguing that the country was still occupied by capital. This is an identification which Godard has never relinquished. The idea that cinema has been occupied, an occupation which he must resist, is one of the enduring themes of Godard's interviews for the last three decades.

As for the Dziga Vertov films, they were made for an audience that didn't exist at the time, and it is hard to imagine them finding a real one now. Their politics seems grotesque, if not offensive, but it is difficult to think of a more comprehensive critique of the audiovisual world of information, a world whose dominance is far greater now than when they were made. Godard has developed rather than abandoned their theses. The break that Godard made in 1968 has never been renounced; it has been enlarged and intensified. Their films do not generate much pleasure, but anyone wishing to make a documentary is either consciously or unconsciously going to use techniques, strategies and procedures which are analysed with wit and brilliance in the Dziga Vertov work. The collaboration with Gorin is acknowledged by both as a real collaboration. For Godard, Gorin kept him going when he was stuck, "it was a way of still being in the business". Gorin says of Godard, "I gave him hope when he didn't have any".

As for May 1968 itself, who knows what future generations may find in this extraordinary moment – into what millenarian lineages it may yet be woven, into what banal litany of tragic idiocy it may yet disappear? Godard has said that in reality the New Wave was the Last Wave, and 1968 certainly seems to bear more relation to an insurrectionary past (there had been barricades in Paris almost every decade from 1789 on) than to the media future. For Raphaël Sorin, now head of the publishers Fayard, his generation has failed to deliver – in literature, in politics, or in philoso-

† 19 | Zhisui Li, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*. New York: Random House, 1996.

phy. Certainly, if one thinks back to the moment at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in the mid-1960's, when Robert Linhart was producing *Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes* and Jacques-Alain Miller was producing *Cahiers pour l'analyse* (both of whom were classmates of Gorin and Sorin at Louis le Grand), it would have been difficult to believe that Linhart's place in the history books would be a footnote to May²⁰, and Miller's a footnote in the history of psychoanalysis²¹. Possibly even more surprising, and more difficult to explain, would be the way in which the thinkers of that moment (particularly Foucault and Derrida) became paralysing academic orthodoxy in the United States.

Perhaps the real legacy of May 1968 is a set of questions. At its most important level the student movement was anti-authoritarian – a refusal to be policed sexually or aesthetically. In many ways it was very successful, but that was because it was going with the grain of capitalism and not against it. And May dismally failed to produce alternative structures. The disastrous failure of thousands of collectives all over the Western world bears eloquent witness to the inability to find new forms of authority. If all authority had been removed, how did one regulate disagreement when revolutionary correctness made disagreement impossible?

Godard and Gorin's original business arrangement stipulated that the money would be split 50/50 – after (no surprise here) deductions to pay off Godard's back taxes. When Gorin fled, he left the company behind him. Much later, Godard rang him in Los Angeles and told him that he really needed to come back to Paris to deal with it. For Gorin, the questions of rent and wages did not amount to much and should have been dealt with by Godard; Godard says, "there was a need to wash up, to empty the ashtrays which Gorin – as all the militants I knew – didn't want to do".

In the end, *Tout Va Assez Bien* was wound up as "fraudulently bankrupt", to use the French legal term, and Gorin was banned from commercial activity for three years. Sometime after this Gorin, now teaching in California, was told that *Tout va bien* had played on French television. He rang Godard to ask for his share of the money. The row was so bitter that Gorin put down the phone.

120 1 Linhart suffered a collapse in May, unable to reconcile the theoretical primacy of the working class with the student revolution happening in the streets outside the Ecole. Gorin attended the meeting at the Ecole at which Linhart ordered his Marxist-Leninist troops to steer clear of this diversionary battle. Gorin, like many others, ignored Linhart. See Hervé HAMON and Patrick ROTMAN, op. cit., pp 464-81.

121 1 Miller married Jacques Lacan's daughter and has become "the guardian of the flame" of the Lacanian heritage.

SYNDICAT GÉNÉRAL
DES MÉTALLURGES

LA RETRAITE

DE



À 60 ANS

16-

Jean-Pierre Gorin

Erik Ulman

Jean-Pierre Gorin first achieved international attention through his collaborations with Jean-Luc Godard as the Dziga Vertov Group. This association has brought him both celebrity and neglect: those who admire the films of the “Vertov period” often attribute their virtues to Godard with scant or no reference to Gorin; and many that dislike them often view Gorin as a punk who led the master astray while riding his coattails. This controversy tends to overshadow and ignore the small but impressive body of work that Gorin has produced since parting with Godard in 1973. To be sure, circumstances have made these films all too easy to overlook: there are only three features and a pair of related video works, along with a number of aborted or never-begun projects, made at intervals of years, distributed spottily, and of deliberate modesty.

These solo films, however, may well prove as important as the collaborations with Godard. What they lose in provocation and extremity they gain back in charm and in complexity of form and nuance: they stand among the most ingenious and potentially fertile contributions to the “film essay” genre. They are characterized by a resolute fidelity to the local, revealed with tenderness and humor, and are personal and engaging in ways unimaginable in the Vertov-period works. These three films – *Poto and Cabengo* (1978), *Routine Pleasures* (1986), and *My Crazy Life* (1991) – deserve to be much more widely seen and discussed; and the videos – *Letter to Peter* and a record of Olivier Messiaen’s opera *St. François d’Assise* (both 1992) – open up new areas which one hopes Gorin will have the opportunity to explore further.

Gorin was born on April 17, 1943 in Paris; his parents were Jewish leftists, his father a respected (and Trotskyite) doctor, his mother a woman of considerable intelligence and somewhat unpredictable

energy. After a turbulent but studious adolescence, Gorin received his baccalaureate in Philosophy in 1960, subsequently enrolling at the Sorbonne. Here he took part in the seminars of Louis Althusser (including the one defining the theory of the ideological state apparatus), Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault. In addition, from 1965 to 1968, Gorin was an editor at *Le Monde*, helping create its weekly literary supplement, “Le Monde des Livres”. In this period he wrote dozens of articles, contributing to the political and aesthetic debates that would lead eventually to the upheaval of May 1968.

Gorin first met Godard in 1967. At this time Godard was becoming increasingly interested in the younger generation and, by extension, in radical politics, as *Masculin féminin* (1966) indicates. Gorin was a perfect contact, as one of the most articulate and engaged of France’s young New Left. For his part Gorin had been a cinephile since his youth, and the formal and political rigor of Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet’s *Nicht Versöhnt* (1965) had stimulated his desire to make films. Gorin came to befriend Godard: he advised Godard on *La Chinoise* (1967), as someone with first-hand practical and theoretical experience of emergent leftist militancy; and was present during at least some of the shooting of *Le gai savoir* (1968).

In the aftermath of May 1968 Godard turned his back on the conventional film industry, to make films reflecting a new political commitment and developing a new practice, a way of “making films politically,” not merely promulgating leftist ideas within a traditional, and hence discredited, aesthetic. The need was “to return to zero,” as *Le gai savoir* had announced, to “build images” from scratch and to “combat the tyranny of image over sound.”¹¹ With the sporadic assistance of several younger apprentices, including Gorin and Jean-Henri Roger, Godard created *Un film comme les autres* (1968), *British Sounds* (1968), and *Pravda* (1969), films of an aggressive technical leanness and political stridency. These films began to be signed by the “Dziga Vertov Group,” a name chosen to pay homage to the then-neglected master of Soviet film, to his radical politics and his exposure of film’s material and formal foundations, his dismantling of cinematic illusion.

Although this name apparently originated with Gorin, the first “Vertov films” were fundamentally Godard’s own work. However, a turning point came with *Vent d’Est* (1969). Godard went to Italy to film a Western in collaboration with a num-

¹¹ See James Monaco’s chapter “Godard: Theory and Practice: The Dziga-Vertov Period”, in *The New Wave* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 221), which remains probably the most clear-sighted general accounting of this group of films.

ber of prominent leftists, including Brazilian director Glauber Rocha, activist Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and spaghetti Western star/communist Gian Maria Volonté. This collaboration quickly stalled, due to general indiscipline; and Godard invited Gorin to help salvage the project. This effort inaugurated a period of truly joint authorship that would encompass *Lotte in Italia* (1969), *Vladimir et Rosa* (1971), *Tout va bien* (1972), and *Letter to Jane* (1972); *Ici et ailleurs* (1975) can be considered an appendix to this body of work. Parcelling out authorial responsibilities in these films is difficult, and, indeed, contrary to their intentions: Gorin has remarked that they arose from a “constant exchange of ideas” that aimed at a fundamental “transformation of practice,” a repudiation of the auteurism which Godard had helped formulate². Be that as it may, it seems that at least *Lotte in Italia* and *Tout va bien* are, if anything, more Gorin’s than Godard’s, and that in the others creative responsibility was fairly equal³. The two filmmakers were working together daily, not only on these larger films but on smaller projects: there were “news reports,” shown daily in Paris, which included interviews and skits (Juliet Berto in a bathtub explaining the Vietnam War); and also proposals for advertisements, at least one of which was actually filmed, as a source of money.

Although Gorin remains proud of the Vertov films, it is hardly for their ideological purity: to this extent, these films, as he once characterized the militants in *La Chinoise*, are marked by a “cretinistic seriousness,”⁴ all too premonitory of the pompous puritanism of much subsequent political art. More durable are their formal beauty⁵, their daring, their emphasis on soundtrack over image, their accuracy as time capsules, their humor (evident at least from *Vladimir et Rosa* on, although often unremarked), and what could be called their proto-punk “do it yourself” ethos. Most of these features are far removed from the academic discourse and practice which have constituted the principal legacy of these films, and of which Gorin is largely dismissive: for Gorin, to read these films principally for their political message is uninteresting, even beside the point. To be sure, it is difficult to believe that the political content of *Vent d’Est*, for example, is ironical

121 These comments are from a video interview with Gorin conducted in Melbourne in 1987; I do not know the identity of the interviewer.

131 Gorin once modestly asserted, “Basically all I have done comes from Jean-Luc’s previous work; that’s why some of our last films are considered highly Godardian, even though I made them”. Quoted in MONACO, 215.

141 Melbourne interview.

151 Once vigorously denied: Godard: “if *Vent d’Est* succeeds at all, it’s because it isn’t beautiful at all”. In James Roy MACBEAN, “Godard and Rocha at the Crossroads of *Wind From the East*,” in *Film and Revolution*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975, p. 120.

or incidental; and the arrogance of Gorin and Godard's public persona at the time (see Ralph Thanhauser's *Godard in America* [1970]) has not aged well. Still, the Vertov films remain extremely rewarding, and deserve renewed attention.

It has taken me some time to see *Vent d'Est* freshly: my initial encounters with the film were with nth-generation video dupes of an American version with an appalling voiceover (in which *L'Humanité* becomes "human-nite"). Given the ugliness and indecipherability of sound and image, one relied heavily both on the published script and on the famous essays on the film by such writers as Peter Wollen, which seemed to celebrate it for purveying what Gilberto Perez has called "militant unpleasure", an unrelenting negation of any aesthetic values as inadmissibly treacherous superstructure⁶. This grimly ideological doggedness is part of *Vent d'Est*, but only part: what is most crucial in the film, as can be seen in the lovely Japanese DVD release, is its unresolved dialectic between verbal ideology and visual beauty, in which each stands as a critique of the other. If the soundtrack denounces the American imperialist Griffith, the lush natural splendour of the almost static opening shots make one think of Griffith's last interview:

What the modern movie lacks is beauty – the beauty of moving wind in the trees, the little movement in a beautiful blowing on the blossoms in the trees. That they have forgotten entirely.... In my arrogant belief, we have lost beauty⁷.

Vent d'Est is an exceptionally rich film, if one takes the time both to see and hear, and to set aside the rhetoric surrounding it – as an extension and subversion of the Western, revealing and interrogating its implicit ideologies, as a document of the possibilities and dangers of the revolutionary project (as in the chilling sequence about terrorism near the end, in which Pop still lifes descending from *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* [1966] become diagrams of home-made explosives), and for the complex intersections of formal beauty with loaded and refractory content.

Where *Vent d'Est* is wide-ranging and heterogeneous, *Lotte in Italia* is tight, disciplined, even elegant: Gorin has described its structure as resembling a deck of

⁶ See Peter WOLLEN, "Godard and Counter Cinema: *Vent d'Est*," in *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies*. London: New Left Books, 1982, pp. 79-91. For Perez's dismissal of the "Dziga Vertov Group" films, see *The Material Ghost*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1998, p. 362.

⁷ Ezra GOODMAN, *The Fifty-Year Decline and Fall of Hollywood*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961, p. 11.

cards, proceeding by juxtapositions and substitutions of more or less static panels to articulate an Althusserian analysis of the ideologies underpinning a young Italian militant's existence. By contrast, *Vladimir et Rosa*, a reflection on the Chicago 8 trial as political theater, is the wildest and most miscellaneous of the Vertov films, its reckless abundance of materials, skits, implications: it is scatter-shot, but exuberant, and includes some of Gorin and Godard's most significant meditations on the construction of a new cinematic language, cast, often enough, in disarmingly comic guise.

To my mind, however, the greatest films to emerge from the collaboration are the last three: *Tout va bien*, *Letter to Jane*, and *Ici et ailleurs*.

Tout va bien is, for obvious reasons, the most "professional" of the Vertov films. Gorin and Godard wanted to work again on a larger and more "popular" scale. To this end, they secured two stars from the left, Yves Montand and Jane Fonda; devised a narrative; and built a set – a sausage factory headquarters during a strike. Having accepted these concessions, Gorin and Godard play with them cunningly: for much of the film the stars function as extras, while other "non-stars" assume center stage; the stars' "love story," once it emerges, fixes their romance solidly in the context of their jobs (as film director and journalist respectively), and thus within the hypocrisies of commercial culture; and the set, in tribute to Jerry Lewis' *The Ladies' Man* (1961), is a cutaway functioning as another Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt*. Such strategies make a film whose formal complexity matches a new variety of discourse: Gorin and Godard here allow boss, unionist, and radical striker all to speak for themselves, giving us more freedom to weigh their respective positions. This freedom is welcome, though it also indicates a loss of fervor. As Gorin has said, *Tout va bien* is a film of 1972, not of 1968; and the bleakness of its concluding travelling shot underlines the inadequacy of the revolutionary actions that it depicts, the passing of the revolutionary moment⁸.

One last blast of hard militant theory, *Letter to Jane* has received especially bad press, as "insufferable" and humorless⁹. I find it both funny and revelatory. The film is a fifty-minute meditation on a single photograph of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. Passing the narration between them, and juxtaposing Fonda's image with other

¹⁸ For a more detailed analysis of *Tout va bien*, see David BORDWELL and Kristin THOMPSON, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. New York: Knopf, 1986, pp. 335-42.

¹⁹ PEREZ, 362; Jonathan DAWSON. "Letter to Jane" in *Senses of Cinema*, <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/19/cteq/letter.html>



photographs, Gorin and Godard reflect on the function of Fonda and this image within the Western media's representation of the Vietnamese struggle for self-determination. Some have claimed that the filmmakers are unfair and misogynist in their criticism of their erstwhile collaborator; on the contrary, they are repeatedly at pains to distinguish Fonda as person from the social role they criticize. Further, the excessively pedantic mode of argumentation (proceeding, for example, from "Elements of Elements" to "Elementary Elements"), while no doubt a serious attempt to argue logically, mocks its own absolutism (though few, such as James Monaco, seem to perceive the irony).¹⁰ *Letter to Jane* remains, in Susan Sontag's words, "a model lesson on how to read any photograph, how to decipher the un-innocent nature of a photograph's framing, angle, focus";¹¹ in addition, it is full of provocative insights, especially into the history of film acting, and the eclipse of the silent actor's "materialism" by a vacuous style of "heavy thinking," which Gorin and Godard link directly to an ineffectual Western liberalism.

Ici et ailleurs, completed by Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, is perhaps the most complex of all of these works, a stunning reflection on the Palestinian resistance, on the political dimensions of sound and image, and on the failure of European radicalism after 1968. Commissioned by the Arab League in 1970 to make a film to be entitled *Jusqu'à la victoire*, Gorin and Godard shot footage in Jordan of Al Fatah. Later that year, most of the people they had filmed and whose guests they had been were killed by the Jordanian army in Black September, rendering the working title grotesquely irrelevant and utterly changing the significance of the footage. Eventually Godard, Gorin, and Miéville combined this material with trenchant critiques of the strategies of both the revolutionaries and the filmmakers, drawing from the latter a direct connection to a European left more interested in struggles other than their own and to the coercive and ubiquitous nature of mass communications, in which "chains of images enslaving other images" come to condition and constitute human consciousness. *Ici et ailleurs* is one of the greatest of all political films, achieving an extraordinary formal density with its layered images, sounds, and histories, as well as a political lucidity that remains all too relevant today.

The Vertov period had been intensely productive and exciting; but Gorin needed to strike out on his own. He was still very much in Godard's shadow; further, he

† 10 † See Monaco's very useful discussion in *The New Wave*, pp. 245-50.

† 11 † Susan SONTAG, *On Photography*. New York: Delta, 1977, p. 108.

felt stifled by politics and theory, and wanted to explore new areas. In an interview with Martin Walsh, Gorin identified his favorite American filmmaker as Russ Meyer and remarked: "I'm no longer trying to be a Brechtian. The very idea of trying to think through the lenses of a guy who was thinking in the 1930's seems to me, now, extraordinarily backward.... I'm hardly even a Marxist anymore, so it opens my space a little".¹²

Gorin's first solo film is now lost. Entitled *L'Ailleurs immédiat*, it was largely complete when the drug arrest of its leading actress stalled production; faced with an indeterminate delay, the producers blithely melted the film down for its silver content. This destruction is intensely to be regretted: on one hand, one wonders how Gorin's career may have developed if the film had been completed and released; and, on the other, the film is likely to have been fascinating. The title's allusion to Georges Bataille indicates the direction Gorin was taking; according to him, *L'Ailleurs* was sexually and psychologically uncompromising, leading Godard to dub it, in contradistinction to Bertolucci's controversial but comparatively safe *Ultimo tango a Parigi* (1972), "the Anti-Tango". Gorin himself played the lead; his descriptions of some of the film's action, in which he recites passages from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* while getting tattooed, or masturbates while hanging outside an upper-story window on a Paris street, perhaps give some idea of the extremity (and zaniness) of the project. Coinciding with, and in some way motivating, this work was the continued deterioration of the revolutionary spirit of May 1968; Gorin has spoken of the increasingly fragmented and deranged nature of the militant left, and of his desire to distance himself from it. Perhaps *L'Ailleurs immédiat* would have been the Dionysian counterpart to Jean Eustache's cold and objective dissection of the 1960's aftermath in *La maman et la putain* (1973).

In any case, after the forced incompletion of *L'Ailleurs*, Gorin left Europe, and, in 1975, accepted Manny Farber's invitation to join the faculty of the University of California at San Diego, where Gorin has remained to the present day. With Farber, Gorin developed a strong and enduring friendship: in Farber's words, they became "twin brains". Farber had long been both an impressive painter as well as one of America's leading film critics: he was one of the first serious advocates of such "action directors" as Mann, Fuller, and Hawks; more recently, he had become an equally astute observer of such avant-gardists as Snow, Straub and Huillet, Fassbinder, and Godard. Gorin's appointment at UCSD involved him

12 | Martin WALSH, "Godard and Me: Jean-Pierre Gorin Talks," in *Take One* (Vol. 5 #1, 1976), pp. 14-15.

in a nourishing dialogue with both Farber and his wife and collaborator Patricia Patterson. In addition, Gorin enjoyed university life: certainly his brilliant and idiosyncratic lectures and mentoring have been indispensable to several generations of art and film students at UCSD. However, one regrets that academia has absorbed so much energy that could have been spent making films.

Gorin's directorial ambitions did not end with his teaching career. He wanted to break into Hollywood, and found work on *Apocalypse Now* (although his role in this legendarily chaotic project came to little more than instructing Frederic Forrest in the intricacies of French cuisine). Still, Gorin was hopeful that Francis Ford Coppola might support him in a project of his own. He had obtained the rights to a number of works by the science fiction writer Philip K. Dick; and, further, Dick had prepared for Gorin an extraordinarily detailed treatment of his novel *Ubik*. Neither Coppola nor George Lucas, however, would back the project, and Gorin had the bitter experience of watching his options lapse on this and other properties.

If Gorin was frustrated in Hollywood, he fortunately had the opportunity to explore documentary. Soon, funded by West German television, he began the first film of what would become a trilogy about language, arrested development, and cultural displacement in Southern California: *Poto and Cabengo*.

Poto approaches the theme of "children and language" through the case of two young San Diego twins, Gracie and Ginny Kennedy, who had apparently invented a private language. Actually, this language was a pidgin form of the German and English they heard in their relative isolation at home. Gorin traces this subject in every direction: the news coverage of the twins, which dwindles from inaccurate hype to nonexistence; the official opinions of child psychologists and linguists; the social ambitions of the twins' unhappy and financially precarious family. In addition, Gorin eschews those recurrent alternative presumptions of documentary film, of neutral reportage or of Godlike omniscience: rather, he enters the story himself as a decidedly inexperienced investigator, a comic Philip Marlowe; and his growing involvement with the twins, introducing them to the world, becomes another strand in the film's "plural narrative". From this complex network of forces, Gorin reveals much about the allure and pressures of an elusive American dream; about the social nature of language; about the displaced legacies of emigration. And, while keeping these large subjects in play, Gorin never loses sight either of the humanity of his subjects – he does not condescend to the pathetic parents – or of the film's formal complexity, which constantly varies its permutations of sound, written text, and image, often, as in the Vertov period, privileging the first. Formally and thematically, the film is a virtuoso piece of

polyphony, all the more remarkable for never losing its lightness of touch, even as it grazes profundity and tragedy¹³.

If *Poto* was about children and language, *Routine Pleasures* makes of its investigation of “men and imagination” in 1980’s America, “a small-scale epic,” in Gorin’s words, a remake of *Only Angels Have Wings*¹⁴. Gorin’s principal subject is a group of model train enthusiasts who meet weekly at the Del Mar Fairgrounds in Southern California: their miniature landscapes preserve a lost, perhaps illusory America, and their obsession curiously entwines work and childhood. Gorin weaves this subject with another: his friend and mentor Manny Farber. Farber doesn’t appear, except in photographs; but his paintings and words (and such preoccupations as Jimmy Cagney) do; and Gorin, again assuming the persona of bemused investigator, shuttles between these strands with effortless ingenuity. The film’s intersecting narratives function like the crossing tracks of the train set, or the lines of force of Farber’s paintings, establishing nodes of resemblance and resonance; and all the while Gorin assesses American identity, its experience of geography and frontier, of masculinity, of history, of the relation of private and collective. Like *Poto*, *Routine Pleasures* is notable for its lightness and charm, although the polyphony here is if anything more intricate than in its predecessor. One should also mention Babette Mangolte’s excellent cinematography, marvelously nuanced both in black and white and in color. For *Routine Pleasures*, Gorin won the award for Best Experimental Documentary at the Festival dei Popoli in Florence.

Again, academic obligations were a principal reason for the delay before Gorin’s next film. *My Crazy Life* (which won the Special Jury Prize at Sundance in 1992) rounds off his California trilogy with an exploration of the life of a Samoan gang in Long Beach. This is perhaps the most difficult of Gorin’s solo films, deliberately intervening in the reality it documents more frequently and elusively than its predecessors, and forgoing the orientation hitherto provided by Gorin’s traditional persona of investigator. Rather as Jean Rouch had done in *Moi, un noir* (1958), Gorin invites his subjects to collaborate actively in his representation of them, most evidently in some obviously acted scenes, but more subtly as well, as in apparently spontaneous but actually scripted monologues. In addition, Gorin widens the scope from merely documenting daily life in Long Beach: several gangsters go to

¹³ | See also Vivian SOBCHACK, “16 Ways to Pronounce Potato: Authority and Authorship in *Poto and Cabengo*,” *The Journal of Film and Video*, issue XXXVI, fall 1984, pp. 21–29.

¹⁴ | Melbourne interview.

Samoa and encounter their cultural origins, both in family and in fantasy. Even science fiction intrudes in the ruminations of a computer in a sympathetic cop's patrol car; these musings stand in, perhaps, for the missing Gorin character, but disrupt the film's tone. Despite such flights, *My Crazy Life* resists all sensationalism: there is no spectacular violence, nor any romanticizing or demonizing of its subjects. One is struck instead by the gangsters' curious innocence, and by the normative tedium of their existence, from which Gorin manages to invent a texture whose complexity only unfolds itself over repeated viewings.

Since *My Crazy Life*, Gorin has, as he has said, "focused on the possibility of rethinking film narrative along musical structural lines". Musicality has in various ways long been a concern of Gorin: one thinks of his intelligent choice of music in his films (Erroll Garner and Mozart played by Gould in *Poto*, Conlon Nancarrow in *Routine*, Joji Yuasa's intermittent but elegant score for *My Crazy Life*), but, more essentially, of the emphasis on the soundtrack already characteristic of the Vertov films, and of the rhythmic and polyphonic structures of his solo works. *Letter to Peter* (1992), a feature-length video built around Peter Sellars' staging of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* in Salzburg, is a kind of etude extending and synthesizing these concerns. However, it is not as rich as his films: perhaps reflecting a certain impatience with Sellars (evidenced by welcome if somewhat rude fastforwards during some of his monologues), it doesn't completely integrate its often interesting views of the rehearsal process with its larger speculations on music and creation. More successful, if less ambitious, is Gorin's record of the performance, made for Österreichischer Rundfunk, which makes Sellars' staging (to my mind questionable) as effective as live video can register. In any case, these two direct engagements with music itself have sharpened Gorin's interest in filmic musicality; and among his current projects are soundtracks built as a primary layer, to which images will be added later, reversing usual filmic practice. Gorin has also been writing filmscripts and stories; and in 2001 he directed a workshop in Japan with a number of young Japanese artists. Here, in collaboration with the students and with painter/videographer Ryuta Nakajima, he shot footage for a projected video "E-mail" tribute to his friends and elders Godard and Chris Marker. In the past months, Gorin has at last begun shaping this footage: one is glad that Gorin's exchange of ideas and enthusiasm with this younger generation, and the growing international interest in his work, has helped renew his own creative energy, and one hopes that the intermittent rhythm of Gorin's production will become more steady.

If Godard has fashioned himself into "the ultimate image of the end of Europe" (as Charles Olson once wrote of Ezra Pound), Gorin has done something more

modest. Each of his films chews on recurrent themes—of childhood or nostalgia for childhood, of language and exile – with intensely local concentration. If Marker’s *Sans soleil* (1982) or *The Last Bolshevik* (1993) expand grandly from their immediate subjects to the illumination of History, Gorin’s burrow instead into their locality. Since the generalizing rhetoric of the Vertov period, Gorin has allergically avoided “large statements”: instead, his work is allied with, and tender and inquisitive toward, the small, the individualizing detail. It is, in Manny Farber’s words, “termite art,” “eating its own boundaries,” leaving “nothing in its path other than the signs of eager, industrious, unkempt activity.”¹⁵ In this very modesty, Gorin’s work is perhaps of special importance in a time dominated by the soulless and grandiose spectacles of Hollywood, and by the cynicism and affectlessness of so much “independent” film. Instead, the eccentricity of Gorin’s movies reminds me of those from certain other great contemporaries, like Abbas Kiarostami or João Cesar Monteiro, whose quirky particularity allows them extraordinary range and engenders deep and abundant pleasures.

Filmography as director

Vent d’Est (1969; with Jean-Luc Godard)

Lotte in Italia (1969; with Jean-Luc Godard)

Vladimir et Rosa (1971; with Jean-Luc Godard)

Tout va bien (1972; with Jean-Luc Godard)

Letter to Jane (1972; with Jean-Luc Godard)

Ici et ailleurs (1975; with Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville)

Poto and Cabengo (1978)

Routine Pleasures (1986)

My Crazy Life (1991)

Letter to Peter (1992; video)

St. François d’Assise (1992; video of Peter Sellars’ staging of
Messiaen’s opera)

† 15 † Manny Farber, *Negative Space* (expanded edition). New York: Da Capo, 1998, p. 135.

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The filmmaker Jean-Pierre Gorin talks about how the director of *Land in Trance* became an actor in *Vent d'Est*, which is to be shown this week for the first time in Brazil.

Jean-Pierre Gorin is known for his partnership with Jean-Luc Godard in the 1960's and 1970's. They directed six films together, four of them with various left-wing revolutionaries of the day, as an exercise in collective labor and under the name of the Dziga Vertov Group, a tribute to the Russian filmmaker, to serve as opposition not only to Hollywood, but also to the tradition of Eisenstein. The first film born of this partnership is *Vent d'est* (1969), a western made in Italy with the participation of Gian Maria Volonté, as an actor, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, as a screen writer, as well as an appearance by Glauber Rocha. Part of the film shows a number of people gathered in a deserted spot reflecting on what it is to make movies and, as this was the major concern of the group, what it is to make movies politically. And it is Glauber who, at a crossroads, shows the different paths of cinema, including the one of the Third World, which is "dangerous, divine and wonderful".

The other three films made by the group are *Lotte in Italia* (1969), *Vladimir et Rosa* (1971) and *Jusqu'à la Victoire* (1970), which was unfinished. No longer under the name of Dziga Vertov, Godard and Gorin directed, in 1972, *Tout Va Bien*, with Yves Montand and Jane Fonda, and *Letter to Jane*, a caustic reading of a photo taken of Jane Fonda in Vietnam. The film warranted the attention of

A Friend of Glauber [and Godard]

Jane de Almeida

special article for the newspaper Folha de São Paulo

Susan Sontag in her famous essay *On Photography* (republished recently by Companhia das Letras), presenting it as a lesson in the deciphering of an apparently innocent framework.

Gorin met Godard some time around 1965 when he was the literary editor of *Le Monde* and one of the creators of the supplement "Le Monde des Livres". He had studied philosophy and attended the lectures of Louis Althusser, Jacques Lacan and Michel Foucault. He was an eminent participant of the new generation of the French left-wing, which was to culminate in the revolution of May 1968, and represented an innovating force in the thinking of Godard at that time, so much so that he was one of his confidants and advisors for *La Chinoise* (1967) and *Le Gai Savoir* (1968), films that were made before those of the Dziga Vertov Group.

Since 1975, Jean-Pierre Gorin has been a professor for the department of visual arts at the University of California, in San Diego, and he still directs, writes and produces films. Gorin took the trouble to answer the questions below and said that they brought back fond memories. He also said that, if he could, he would take a plane straight away so that he could see the presentation of *Vent d'est* in Brazil.

Glauber Rocha's part in Vent d'Est is small but crucial, as he is the one to point to the paths of the cinema at the crossroad? How did you and Godard meet Glauber, and what was in your mind when you decided to invite him to play that part?

Glauber, Glauber, Glauber. At the crossroad always. He pops up first in my life in Paris a few months after I watched *Land in Trance* some 30 times in a row over a period of ten days. We meet through Raphael Sorin, now Houellebecq's publisher, who would after be linked to *Vent d'Est*. An immediate connection. It translates into endless roaming through Paris streets (Glauber knew how to push the night away!) and a disheveled fifteen-day crash course in "Tropicalismo". Then a year later, as *Vent d'Est* is being shot, he emerges from the night, sits at our table in this dingy Roman trattoria and knots the threads of our last conversation as if we had just left each other the night before. I remember introducing him to Godard. I might be wrong on that one, they might have

nodded to each other prior in some festival or other. I know the idea to enlist Glauber and offer him this cameo as the talking signpost at the crossroad of the various ways of cinema came from me. What was in my mind? Pretty obvious, isn't it? Things were splitting at the seams. It felt that everything could be and was being put on the table to be examined anew. The ways of images and sounds were being questioned all over the place. In a sense we were all (I mean those of us for whom film mattered both in and of itself and in relationship to the convulsions of the world it lived in) at the crossroad. The question was not the question of a "true" path, but the question of the type of dialogue that could be knotted, folded from all this disparate questioning that was going on. Nobody could simply dream to adopt wholesale the experimentation of anybody else, precisely because these experimentations refracted the specificity of experience. That's why the guys of the Cinema Novo were so important: for how Brazilian they were determined to be, for their specificity and how it forced us to interrogate our own and sent us in a direction that had not been mapped out. Glauber's apparition in *Vent d'Est* is both an homage to the Cinema Novo and an affectionate piece of naïve theater that indicates that the works done in Brazil forced us to bushwhack our way out of the thicket (Hollywood, the New Wave, the Ice Age political cinema of the Cold War etc...) toward the specificity of our time and place.

After almost 40 years, how do you see the propositions and the production of the Dziga Vertov Group?

In 1989, at the time of the bi-centennial anniversary of the French revolution a newspaper interviewed various world leaders to get their one line assessment of its legacy. Deng Tsiao Ping, then the leader of China, hesitated for a while and then answered: "Too early to tell!" All joking aside, and with due modesty, I'll use the same answer. I recently looked at *Vent d'Est* and sent the following note to a friend:

Long e-mail from a Brazilian Cultural Center that seems bent on showing *Vent d'Est* for the first time in Glauber Rocha land (got a Japanese DVD edition of the old chestnut and I was blown away by the fact that it looked so fucking gorgeous, not to mention the fact that it felt in turn like a) the only true adaptation of the *Iliad* (sorry I'm coming out of *Troy*, and pretty pissed off at that!)...I mean *Vent d'Est* as the Culture War seen by two Cassandra(s) (two for the price of one at

that! JLG/JPG), b) a small scale Shakespearian epic (nobody cared/cares to read the late 1960's as a Rosencrantz and Guildenstern romp, but I did then/do even more so now...my generation put poor Y. (a.k.a. Marxism and its avatars) into the grave...it was dead then but it did not know it...almost 30 years to wait for the ghost to dissipate into the wind (Tien An Men + the crumbling of the Berlin wall), c) one the best science fiction pieces ever (if *2001* is Dullards in space, *Vent d'Est* is Dullards in the roman countryside, the postscript to *Bouvard and Pécuchet* that Flaubert never quite wrote where he intended to collect the writings of his two blockheads... a perfect complement to *La Chinoise* in that respect).

So, "too early to tell" ... I am sure that in ten years I'll see *Vent d'Est* and the work I did then through a different set of welder's goggles. The affection, the irony, the infuriation they generated in me then and they generate now will still remain, but the works will seem to address yet another set of preoccupations. There are works that do that; they remain mysteriously alive and capable to address times beyond their time. I call them "decent". They are works that display a director's embattlement with the task at hand, show him/her sweating the details, juggling several balls at the same time and not afraid to drop a few on the floor (out of incapacity as well out of showmanship just to get the audience on his/her side). All in all I have made "decent" works.

Do you think that the crossroads metaphor is still valid, after the "winds from the east" stopped blowing so strongly, and considering that the cinema nowadays rarely questions the cinema itself, as it did back then?

I beg to differ. The questions are there. I can hear them in the films of Lars von Trier like I can hear them in the films of Apichatpong Weerasethakul. I can see them snake through and shape the films of Abbas Kiarostami and the films of Hou Hshiao Hshen or Tsai Ming Liang. And whether I like or dislike these films is completely beside the point. I could add to the list. Known names and names yet unknown. I tend to think that filmmakers fall in two groups the people of the idiom and the people of the grammar. The people of the idiom tend to function best in the stability of conventions; the people of the grammar are bent on interrogating them. Once in a while, the members of one tribe wander (even if for a frightened moment) in the territory of the other. And the ebb and flow of history tend to favor alternately one tribe over the other. Enough with the armchair anthropology! The fact is that a lot of questioning is going on. It always was going on. It will always

be going on. Always...it is inherent to the practice be it of film, writing, music, painting. The question might be more squarely put on the critics. What makes them so unwilling to pick up on the questions that are being asked, so incapable to trace them, to amplify them? What makes them so determined to reinforce the vapidty of the status quo? A little less "thumbs up/thumbs down" and a little more reflection might help. If anything, I think that filmmakers should take the vow to grab the pen and make the effort to speak of the films of others (or the moments or gestures in these films) that move them aesthetically and emotionally. A little less insularity and a little more generosity might help to reclaim the territory that has been lost with the collapse of criticism.

Do you believe it is still possible to experiment with the very language of the cinema, as it was back then? Is it still possible for the cinema to question itself? How? If differently from that time, in which way? If you believe it is no longer possible, why not?

Yes, emphatically so. A few summary disconnected pointers. The digital, first. What does it bring? When will it come into its own, the properties of the digital being explored and not simply considered as an expedient form of filming? What esthetic does it carry forth? How does that esthetic will affect and transform or sense of storytelling? Sound design, second. When are filmmakers going to acknowledge the sophistication of their audience as far as sound design is concerned? When are they going to actively understand that the average viewer has now a familiarity with the complexities of sound layering, sampling, mixing that they derive from their familiarity with popular music? And when is this understanding going to translate into new and different narrative strategies? The 1960's were marked by a shift that saw filmmakers move away from literary models (high and low) and find their point of reference in painting. Early Godard is a pretty good example of what it meant: how many times did he force us to read a frame like we read a painting by Matisse, flat expanses of primary colors lit as if by the sun at noon? And how much did this strategy gel into a new form of narrative? It seems inevitable that music (or more aptly said, sound) will offer the next referent. Alleluia. The era of the sound film is upon us. Look, I could go on and line up the signs of hope (i.e. the shifts and changes that force filmmakers to embrace their time). The shifts in the political winds would figure prominently on the list but it would take us many nights around the campfire.

You made six films with Godard. How was working with him as a partner? What characteristics from Godard do you see in your work after having produced so many films together?

I'll take a rain check on this one. Understand that one of the curses my youth has imposed upon me is that people address me as if I was caught in its eternal present like a deer in the headlights. I suspect that if I had been a) a tad less naïve, b) a bit less ballsy, I would have joined forces with someone who would not have concentrated on his head the mystic of the author with a capital A. But so be it. I felt he was the one whose practice could accommodate my questions. This being said, it is both flattering and tiresome to be brought back to one's youth with such unnerving consistency.

A few years after your partnership with Godard, you moved to the U.S. and began to teach in a university. Still, you directed four films (please correct me if I am wrong: Poto and Cabengo, Routine Pleasures, My Crazy Life, Letter to Peter), and also wrote some scripts. How do you manage your academic life and your cinematographic production?

As best/as badly as I can. Teaching is fairly simple. It consists in persuading people that they don't need you. As all things simple it requires time and effort to achieve. I also saw it as political duty as I felt the need to pass something on and to show young folks to "never underestimate the revolutionary power of the past", as Pasolini once said. Besides, it keeps one on the ball of one's feet and one's brain finely tuned if one does it with passion. Few do, alas. As for the films I got more slowed down by the incapacity of producers to take risks, the absurd cecity of critics, my almost pathological disdain for playing the game and (let's be honest) my own procrastinating ways.

What are your latest works (or projects)?

I have just finished a script, *The Devil's Dicks*. It is a straight genre film that I wrote with my partner Patrick Amos, and that I don't intend to direct. A kind of *Ghostbusters* meets *Saló*, cartoonish to the nth power. It came out one of some sense that this format might best suited to tackle these times of ours.

Some authors consider you to be a kind of resistance between the wearisome grandiloquence of Hollywood movies and the cynicism of the American "independent" cinema. How do you feel about that?

Hey, I'll take them where I can get them! Look I make the kind of films I make out of necessity. By default would be a more appropriate term. That's my palette. That's my voice. My little music. Can't do anything else. It's both my glory and my curse. A limited and yet ambitious way to function in the world.

And now, as long as I have answered your questions, a request. Thank Caetano Veloso, Tom Ze, Gilberto Gil, Jorge Ben. Without them it would more difficult to think. And pay a visit to Glauber's grave. The last time we talked, he called me collect for two hours to tell me "we were right". He never gave me enough space to answer. And I was so broke then that the only thing I could think of was how I could get him off the line. Now, in hindsight, I think he might have called it. Not exactly as he meant it then, but who cares...

Vent d'Est
or Godard and Rocha at the crossroads
James Roy MacBean

Near the middle of *Vent d'Est* (*Wind from the East*), there is a sequence where Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha plays a brief but symbolically important role. As Rocha stands with arms outstretched at a dusty crossroads, a young woman with a movie camera comes up one of the paths (and the fact that she is very evidently pregnant is undoubtedly "pregnant" with meaning). She goes up to Rocha and says very politely: "Excuse me for interrupting your class struggle, but could you please tell the way towards political cinema?"

Rocha points first in front of him, then behind and to his left, and he says, "That way is the cinema of aesthetic adventure and philosophical enquiry, while this way is the Third World cinema – a dangerous cinema, divine and marvellous, where the questions are practical ones like production, distribution, training 300 film-makers to make 600 films a year for Brazil alone, to supply one of the world's biggest markets."

The woman starts off down the path to the Third World, when the inexplicable appearance of a red balloon seems to discourage her from proceeding in this direction. She takes a half-hearted kick at the ball which rolls back to her anyway, as if it were doggedly insisting on following her – like Lamorisse's famous "red balloon", which it resembles – and she then doubles back behind Glauber Rocha, who is still standing at the crossroads with arms outspread like a scarecrow or a crucified Christ without a cross. She sets out anew along the path of aesthetic adventure and philosophical enquiry.

I choose to begin an analysis of *Vent d'Est* by describing this brief sequence and suggesting some of its tongue-in-cheek symbolism because I believe it to be of critical importance not just for an

understanding of what Godard is trying to do in this film, but also for an understanding of the way certain very important issues are shaping up in the vanguard of contemporary cinema. The presence of Rocha in this sequence is particularly significant; but the issues involved certainly go beyond just Godard and Rocha – and ultimately it may well be cinema itself which now stands at a critical crossroads.

To get at these issues and to delve more deeply into the significance of the crossroads sequence, I think it best to take first a brief detour and explain a little of how *Vent d'Est* came into being and of Rocha's problematical association with this film at various stages of its development. Shortly after France's student uprisings in May 1968, Godard contacted one of the May movement's leading militants, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and suggested that they collaborate on a film project which would explore the deadly ideological malaise at the root not only of French politics but of the post-Cold War political situation in general. Godard also indicated his desire to make the film in such a way as to draw parallels between the repressiveness of traditional political structures and the repressiveness of traditional film structures, particularly those of the standard Western.

Cohn-Bendit agreed, and Godard contacted Italian producer Gianni Barcelloni, who had previously worked with directors like Pasolini and Glauber Rocha and the young French underground film-maker Philippe Garrel. Barcelloni persuaded Cineriz to advance him \$100,000 for "a Western in color, to be scripted by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, directed by Jean-Luc Godard, and starring Gian Maria Volonté". What the producer and distributor apparently were expecting was something on the order of a "*Cohn-Bendit le fou*".

Shooting took place in Italy in early summer 1969. Godard, who by this time had committed himself to collective creation, assembled his three-man Dziga Vertov Group (which at this writing, is down to two members – Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin), his actress wife Anne Wiazemsky, numerous Italian actors and technicians, and a number of French and Italian militants of diverse leftist persuasions. Cohn-Bendit, who had discussed with Godard the overall conception of the film, showed up for only part of the shooting, apparently argued with Godard and Gorin, and does not appear in the finished film (as Godard said in Berkeley last April, "all the anarchists went to the beach"). Exit Cohn-Bendit. Enter Glauber Rocha.

In Rome for talks with Barcelloni, Rocha encountered Godard, who, as Rocha tells it, suggested that the two of them should coordinate efforts "to destroy cinema" – to which Rocha replied that he was on a very different trip, that his business

was to build cinema in Brazil and the rest of the Third World, to handle very practical problems of production, distribution etc.

This argument seems to have given Godard the idea of shooting a "Rocha at the crossroads" sequence to include in *Vent d'Est* as a way of delineating divergent revolutionary strategies. Rocha agreed to play his part, although he indicated his reluctance at "joining the collective mythology of the unforgettable French May-Gang".

In any case, the sequence was shot and Godard and Rocha parted amicably, but with each man apparently feeling that the other had failed to understand his position. Godard went to work on editing of *Vent d'Est*, and completed the film early in the winter. Rocha happened to be in Rome again at the time of the private preview, saw the film, and found himself – and everyone else – in such bewilderment and consternation at the path taken by Godard that he decided to write an article about the film for the Brazilian magazine *Manchete* ¹.

At Cannes in May 1970, *Vent d'Est* was given a midnight showing during the Director's Fortnight. (Godard, by the way, didn't want the film shown at Cannes at all: it was entirely the distributor's doing.) A few people admired the film; most hated it. Ditto for the September showing of *Vent d'Est* at the New York Festival. Ditto again for the showings a few weeks later in Berkeley and San Francisco. But that kind of reaction is more or less to be expected whenever a new Godard film is first released. What is unusual and a bit more complicated is the controversy over whether or not *Vent d'Est* can be considered a "visually beautiful" film, and whether or not "visual beauty" is an attribute or a liability given Godard's revolutionary aims.

Much of the controversy over the film's visual quality may arise simply from the fact that both 35mm and 16mm prints of the film are being shown; and that visually these are two very different films. Although the film was shot (entirely outdoors, by the way) in 16mm, it is the blown up 35mm print which is by far the better of the two, with very lush colour (especially the greens of the beautiful Italian countryside rose-red wall of an old half-ruined peasant dwelling). The 16mm print is extremely dark and murky, with very false, somber color.

But the controversy really gets thick when people start debating the relative merits and demerits of visual beauty (or its absence) in *Vent d'Est*. And as things now stand, it's even a bit difficult to determine who said what, and why – and which print they were talking about. For example, when the film was shown in

[1] See *Manchete* n. 928 (January 31st, 1970), Rio de Janeiro.

Berkeley and San Francisco, some critics were heard countering viewers' objections to the "visual trash" by pointing that Glauber Rocha had supposedly criticized the film for being "too beautiful" and thereby remaining in the realm of aesthetics instead of functioning as a politically militant film. The trouble is, Rocha doesn't take this position at all. This line of reasoning, while mistakenly attribute to Rocha, is accepted in principle by Godard, who, however, turns the argument around to assert that "if *Vent d'Est* succeeds at all, it's because it isn't beautifully made at all". As for Rocha, in his *Manchete* article he comes out against *Vent d'Est* not because the film remains in the realm of aesthetics, but rather because he sees Godard as trying to destroy aesthetics. Rocha praises the film for its "desperate beauty" but reproaches Godard for feeling so desperate about the usefulness of art. He laments that such a gifted artist as Godard (whom he compares to Bach and Michelangelo) should no longer have faith in art and should seek instead to "destroy" it.

For Rocha, the present intellectual crisis in Western Europe over the usefulness of art is senseless and politically negative. He sees the European artist – best exemplified by Godard – as having worked himself into a dead end, and he concludes that where cinema is concerned, the Third World may be the only place where an artist can still fruitfully go about the task of making films. Godard, on the other hand, reproaches Rocha for having "a producer's mentality", for thinking too much in so-called "practical" terms of production, distribution, markets etc., thereby perpetuating the capitalist structures of cinema by extending them to the Third World – and in the process, neglecting urgent theoretical questions that must be asked if Third World cinema is to avoid merely repeating the ideological errors of Western cinema.

What sorts of ideological errors might Godard have in mind? Well, let's go back to the crossroads sequence in *Vent d'Est*. If our association of the red plastic ball with Lamorisse's "red balloon" is correct, then this sequence reads something like this: the cinema, at a very pregnant stage of creative development, turns to the Third World for advice and direction regarding the proper relation between cinema and society ("political cinema"). Given a somewhat equivocal answer by Glauber Rocha, but sufficiently impressed by what he says about Third World cinema (and perhaps impressed by the way he says it – or rather sings it in Portuguese) cinema starts off down the path to Third World cinema, only to discover, a few steps along the way, that Third World cinema is turning out Third World imitations of *The Red Balloon*. Discouraged by this, cinema decides quickly that the real way to advance lies not in this direction, but to proceed further along the path of aesthetic adventure and philosophical enquiry – which path she resolutely sets out upon.

Now, the question arises: what's wrong with *The Red Balloon*? What ideological errors, inherent in Western cinema, are manifest in *The Red Balloon*? What could possibly be objectionable in this charming tale of a little French boy and a balloon which endearingly follows him wherever he goes, like a friendly dog? André Bazin, one might recall, devoted one of his more important essays ("Montage interdit", in vol. I of *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?*) to *The Red Balloon* and to Lamorisse's other popular short, *Crin blanc*. Bazin's argument - a basic stepping-stone in the development of his realist aesthetics - was that even in a film of such imaginative fantasy as *The Red Balloon*, what was essential (*ontologically essential*) was the cinematic faithfulness to reality, "the simple photographic respect for spatial unity". The fact that a trick was employed to enable the balloon to appear to follow the boy didn't matter to Bazin just so long as the trick was not a cinematographic trick - like, in his opinion, montage. What mattered was simply that whatever we saw on the screen had been photographed as it really happened in time and space. What we didn't see (like an imperceptible nylon thread which enabled Lamorisse to control the balloon) didn't matter to Bazin so long as what we did see really took place, was *pris sur le vif* by the camera, and was untampered with in the laboratory or on the editing table.

And it mattered not a bit to Bazin (in fact, it fitted in perfectly with his bourgeois humanist idealism) that this faithfulness to "reality" served as a jumping-off point for simplistic metaphysical pretensions and sentimental moralizing - as in *The Red Balloon*, where a struggle between the little boy and a gang of street toughies symbolizes the struggle between Good and Evil, with Evil winning out here on Earth as the balloon gets popped, but Good winning out in another, "higher" realm, as thousands of other balloons miraculously descend from on high, lift up the little boy, and carry him up to the heavens.

For Bazin, as a careful reading reveals, all roads lead to the heavens. The religious terminology that crops up again and again in his writings is by no means coincidental or even merely metaphorical. Bazin's entire aesthetic system is rooted in a mystical-religious (Catholic) framework of transcendence. The faithful "reflection of reality" is really just a prerequisite - and ultimately merely a pretext - for finding a "transcendental truth" which supposedly exists in reality and is "miraculously" revealed by the camera. Reality, if one reads Bazin carefully, sheds very quickly its *material* shell and is "elevated" to a purely metaphysical (one could justifiably call it a *theological*) sphere.

Given half a chance (as when writing on Bresson's *Journal d'un curé de campagne*), Bazin even lets the cat out of the bag - and his flagrant abuse of the term

“phenomenology” reaches the height of absurdity in “a phenomenology of God’s grace”. But even when writing about a film like Buñuel’s *Land Without Bread*, which is a scathing documentation of the material condition of a specific people (the inhabitants of the valley of Las Hurdes) in a specific country (Spain) under a specific ruling class coalition (between the bourgeoisie and the Catholic Church), all of which is pointed out with bitter emphasis in the film itself, Bazin nonetheless manages to sweep the *material* dust under the table so fast you hardly know what you saw, and he immediately takes off for the more edifying dust of heavens.

Not once, it has been pointed out ², does Bazin in his article on *Land Without Bread* even mention the words “class”, “exploited”, “rich”, “capitalism”, “property”, “proletariat”, “bourgeoisie”, “order”, “money”, “profit” etc. And what words do we find in their place? Large ones, broad generous concepts that are the staple of a long tradition of bourgeois humanist idealism – words like “conscience”, “salvation”, “sadness”, “purity”, “integrity”, “objective cruelty of the world”, “transcendental truth”, “cruelty of human condition”, “unhappiness”, “the cruelty in the Creation”, “destiny”, “horror”, “pity”, “Madonna”, “human misery”, “surgical obscenity”, “love”, “*dialectique pascalienne*” (it would have to be *pascalienne!*), “all the beauty of a Spanish *Pietà*”, “nobility and harmony”, “presence of the beautiful in the atrocious”, “an infernal earthly paradise” etc., etc. And this is no unique case, either in Bazin’s writings or in bourgeois ideology in general. The more generous and general the concepts, the easier it is to cover up the absence of a materialist, process-oriented analysis of human society that, if undertaken, would reveal some hard, unpleasant facts that could cause people to start rocking the boat. In short, ideology functions at least as much in what it does *not say* – in what it keeps quiet – as in what it does say. As for cinema, Godard deplores the way in which cinema, right from its birth, has been disfigured by a bourgeois capitalist ideology that permeates its very theoretical foundations and has never been correctly diagnosed, much less corrected. In *Vent d’Est*, therefore, he systematically takes apart the traditional elements of bourgeois cinema – especially as exemplified by the Western – revealing the sometimes hidden, sometimes blatant repressiveness which underlies it.

Godard accuses the bourgeois cinema of over-emphasizing and playing upon the deep-seated emotional fears and desires of the audience at the expense of

[2] See Gerard Gozlan’s critical reading of Bazin in *Positif* n. 46 and 47 (June and July, 1962).

their critical intelligence. He seeks to combat this tyranny of the emotions, not because he is “against” emotions and “for” rationality, nor because he is opposed to people’s attitudes and actions being influenced by their experience of art; quite the contrary. But he believes very strongly that the filmgoer should not be taken advantage of, that he should not be *manipulated* emotionally but should instead be addressed directly in a lucid dialogue which calls forth all of his human faculties.

The way things now stand, however, every element of a bourgeois film is carefully calculated to invite the viewer to indulge in a “lived” emotional experience of a so-called “slice of life” instead of assuming a critical, analytical, and ultimately political attitude towards what he sees and hears. Why should one’s attitude towards a film be political, one might ask? The answer is, of course, that the invitation to indulge in emotion at the expense of rational analysis already constitutes a political act – and implies a political attitude on the part of the viewer, without the viewer necessarily being even aware of it.

For one thing, by letting himself be emotionally “moved” by the cinema – and even demanding that the cinema should be emotionally moving – the filmgoer puts himself at the mercy of anyone who comes along with a lot of money to invest in seeing to it that filmgoers are “moved”. And the people who have that kind of money to invest also have a vested interest in making sure that the film audiences are moved in the right direction – that is, in the direction of perpetuating the investor’s advantageous position in an economic system which permits gross inequities to exist in the distribution of wealth. In short, cinema (as well as television) functions as an ideological tool or weapon used by the ruling-owning class to extend the market for the dreams it sells.

Moreover, as Godard asserts in *Vent d’Est*, cinema tries to pass off bourgeois dreams as reality, and even plays on the heightening and enhancing effect of cinema in an effort to make us believe that these dreams depicted on our movie screens are somehow “larger than life”, that they are not only “real” but somehow “more real than the real”. In bourgeois cinema, all conspires to this effect: the acting style is at the same time “realistic” (or, if filmed on location, simply real), but they are also carefully selected for their beauty and their “larger than life” aspect. Likewise for the costumes, clothing, jewelry, and make-up worn by the actors and actresses, who, themselves, are carefully selected for their “larger than life” aspect. Finally, even sound is used to give us the illusion that we are eavesdropping on a moment of “reality” where the characters are oblivious of our presence and are simply living out their “real-life” emotions.

Since *Week-End*, Godard has rejected conventional film dialogue because he finds that it contributes to this misguided illusion of “reality” and makes it all the easier for the viewer-listener to imagine himself right up there with the people on the screen, present yet “safe”, in a perfect position (that of an eavesdropper and a peeping Tom) to participate vicariously in the emotion of the moment. In short, the bourgeois cinema pretends to ignore the presence of the spectator, pretends that what is being said and done on the movie screen is not aimed at the spectator, pretends that cinema is a “reflection of reality”; yet all the time it plays on his emotions and capitalizes on his identification-projection mechanisms in order to induce him, subtly, insidiously, unconsciously, to participate in the dreams and fantasies that are marketed by bourgeois capitalist society.

There is an excellent sequence in *Vent d'Est* where Godard demonstrates and demystifies what takes place behind the façade of bourgeois cinema. On the sound track we are told that “In ten seconds you will see and hear a typical character in bourgeois cinema. He is in every film and he always plays a Don Juan type. He will describe the room you are sitting in”. We then see a close-up of a very handsome young Italian actor standing at the edge of a swift-running stream and looking directly into the camera. Behind him – but photographed so that depth-perception is greatly reduced and the image as a whole is markedly flat – rises the grassy green slope of the opposite bank.

The young man speaks in Italian, while voices on the soundtrack give us a running translation in both French and English. The translation, however, is rendered “indirectly”: the voice tells us, “He says the room is dark. He sees people sitting downstairs and also up in the balcony. He says there is an ugly old fogey over there, all wrinkled; and over here he says he has spotted a good-looking young chick. He says he would like to lay her. He asks her to come up on the screen with him. He says it’s beautiful up there, with the sun shining and green trees all around and lots of happy people having a good time. He says if you don’t believe him, look...” And at that point the camera suddenly moves back and slightly upward, keeping the young man in focus in the right-hand corner of the frame while it reveals on the left side – and what seems like almost a hundred feet below the young man – a breathtakingly beautiful scene of a waterfall spilling into a natural pool in a shaded glen where young people are diving and swimming in the clear water.

It’s a magnificent shot. The image itself is extremely beautiful, and most amazing of all is the very complex restructuring of space accomplished by such a simple camera movement. But if we think about this sequence and its dazzling

denouement, we realise that everything in it is a calculated come-on aimed at the dreams and fantasies of the audience. The man is young and handsome. When he speaks, he disparages age and ugliness, and glorifies youth and glamour. What he wants is sex, what he offers is sex. On the screen, he assures us, everything is beautiful and people are happy.

And that sudden restructuring of space literally invites us into the image all by itself. Like bourgeois cinema in general, it presents the bourgeois capitalist world as one of great depth, inexhaustibly rich and endlessly inviting. And the bourgeois cinema's predilection for depth-of-field photography (see Bazin) emphasizes the "you are there" illusion and thereby masks its own presence (and its act of presenting this image) behind a self-effacing false modesty calculated to make cinema appear to be the humble servant of "reality" itself instead of what it really is - the not at all humble lackey of the capitalist ruling class. The audience is flirted with, coaxed, and cajoled into coming up on the screen to join the "beautiful people" for a little sex and leisure amid beautiful surroundings. And the thing that really clinches the deal is the stunning virtuosity of the camera in providing visual thrills.

Once again, this raises the problem of visual beauty in "political" cinema; but it also demonstrates how Godard uses visual beauty in new ways that serve to demystify (and make us less vulnerable to) the old uses of visual beauty in bourgeois cinema. After all, if beauty (like language) is one of the arms the ruling class uses to pacify us and "keep us in our place", then one of our tasks is to turn that weapon around and make it work against the enemy. One way to do this is to demystify beauty and to show how the ruling class uses it against us; another way is to effect a "transvaluation of values" in which we make a vice of the bourgeois concept of beauty while making a virtue of a different concept (e.g., "Black is beautiful") which the bourgeoisie will be unable to recognize or accept. In his films since *Week-End*, Godard has been utilizing both of these tactics: his films now have a very different look about them which a lot of people are unable to consider "beautiful", there is always some cinematic element or juxtaposition of elements that calls our attention to just how "beauty" is achieved and how it is used as an ideological weapon.

In any case, whatever the pros and cons may be where "beauty" in a militant film is concerned, it certainly does no good to criticise Godard's use of visual beauty in *Vent d'Est* without having understood just how and why he uses it - or, still worse, to criticise him for trying to "move" people emotionally as the bourgeois cinema does, but failing in this effort because his images have a very formal beauty which somehow turns the viewer off instead of turning him

on. And, inexplicably, this latter is exactly what Glauber Rocha seems to do when, in the *Manchete* article, he criticises the shot of the “American cavalry officer” roughing up the girl militant (Anne Wiazemsky) for not really being frightening at all, but only beautiful. What Rocha inexcusably seems not to realise is that Godard does not want this shot to be frightening and that he makes it beautiful in precisely such a way as to ensure that it couldn't be frightening. While the officer (Gian Maria Volonté) wrings the girl's neck and shouts at her, someone offscreen throws thick gobs of red paint that catch in her auburn hair and splatter the officer's dark blue coat. The visual effect, with its rich interplay of colors and textures, is quite striking, and it serves to distance us from the action and the emotion it might otherwise arouse.

A few moments later, Godard gives us another, similar shot, only handled this time more in the emotive style of bourgeois cinema. Instead of shooting from behind the girl's right shoulder as he did in the previous “torture” shot (with torturer and victim face-to-face, but only the face of the torturer seen by the audience), Godard now has the officer holding the girl from behind so that the scene can be shot to reveal both of their faces in frontal close-up, with the framing and composition and lighting drawing our attention particularly to the girl's grimaces of pain. This time, however, no paint is thrown in and there are no overtly theatrical elements of the “distancing” kind. There is only a very good acting performance by Anne Wiazemsky, who really seems to be wincing with great pain. In a bourgeois film this shot might be quite painful or frightening for the audience (especially if the girl screamed, as the bourgeois cinema loves to have actresses do); but in this film, coming after the earlier “torture” shot with the paint thrown in, the painful or frightening effect of the shot is minimized (notice that I do *not* say it is eliminated) and our critical intelligence is alerted to analyse the differences in handling between the two shots.

Later, a similar alerting of our critical faculties occurs in the sequence where the cavalry officer rides around on horseback clubbing the recalcitrant prisoners - another scene which Rocha finds extremely beautiful but which he criticizes for not turning out to be brutal in the way he (and even Ventura, who was the sound man for *Vent d'Est*) thinks the scene was intended. What Godard does in this sequence is to utilise a few of the techniques so often employed by the bourgeois cinema for this type of violent action sequence - turning the sound volume way up and continually making abrupt camera movements. The effect of these devices is usually a high emotional intensity and a very visceral sense of violence and confusion. (Remember their use in *Tom Jones*.) But Godard

has made one major variation on these elements which completely changes our relation to this sequence.

His camera does continually make abrupt movements, but it also traces a very precise formal pattern – swinging abruptly about 35° left, then 35° right, back and forth several times, then abruptly swinging about 35° up, then 35° down, and so on, exploring in a very formal way the closed space of the lush ravine where the action takes place. The purely formal quality of these camera movements (Rocha admirably proclaimed them "unprecedented in the whole history of film") effectively distances us from the action and prevents us from reacting to it emotionally. In short, this sequence is not meant to be brutal, but it is meant to call our attention to the way bourgeois cinema would make it brutal – and, in so doing, brutalizes us.

As in the "torture" shots, our critical intelligence is alerted to compare the way various cinematic elements are normally used and what effects they produce, with the very different way they are used by Godard and the very different effects they produce in *Vent d'Est*. Or at least that's what *should* happen. But if even people like Glauber Rocha fail to see what Godard is doing and why, then something is wrong somewhere. It would be convenient, of course, to pin the blame on Godard, to say that his experiments with image and sound are just too complex or too cryptic to be understood. But I find this argument much more of an excuse for intellectual laziness than a justified put-down on Godard. His experiments with elements of cinema are not hard to understand; after all, he makes a point of critically calling attention to what he is doing. And all he asks is that the viewer-listener do a little critical thinking of his own instead of merely sitting back and waiting for this emotions to be played with. No, what's wrong, I'm afraid, is not what Godard does with image and sound; it's the way even people who should know better look and listen to those images and sounds. What's wrong is the tremendously strong habit of looking at films in a bourgeois way. What's wrong is that even politically militant films are expected to express their militancy in the same language that bourgeois films use to inculcate the dreams and fantasies of bourgeois capitalism. What's wrong is that even among the world's leading film-makers – and even among those who are seeking a revolutionary transformation of society – not nearly enough thought is given to theoretical questions of the uses and abuses of image and sound, and of the ways to build new relations between them that will no longer exploit the viewer-listener but will instead engage him openly and forthrightly in a lucid dialogue, the other half of which must come from him.

But the way things stand now, the filmgoer rarely seems to look upon the cinema as a dialogue between himself and the film, and he relinquishes all too readily his own active part in that dialogue and hands over the tool of dialogue exclusively to the people in the film. And the more emotionally charged the dialogue in the film, the more the viewer is "moved" by it. In *Vent d'Est*, however, this habitual passivity is challenged from the outset, as Godard gives us an opening shot that arouses our curiosity (a young man and woman are seen lying motionless on the ground, their arms bound together by a heavy chain) but he systematically thwarts our expectations by simply holding the shot *for* nearly eight minutes without any action (the young man does stir enough to gently touch the face of the young woman at one point) and without dialogue. In fact, when the voice-over "commentary" finally breaks in (on the "forest murmurs" we have been hearing), what we get is not dialogue but the critique of dialogue.

Ostensibly talking about strike tactics in some labour dispute, the speaker states at one point that what is needed is dialogue, but that dialogue is usually handed over to a "qualified representative" who translates the demands of the workers into the language of the bosses, and in so doing betrays the people he supposedly represents. This voice-over discussion of the failure of dialogue clearly refers to the bargaining dialogues that go on between labour and capital; and a few minutes later, in the next sequence, there is a demonstration (in the style of a Western movie) of the way the "qualified representative" (the union delegate) distorts the real demands of the workers (for revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system which exploits them) by translating those demands into terms the bosses can deal with (higher wages, shorter hours, better working conditions etc.). But in a strange and insightful way, this discussion of the failure of dialogue in the hands of a "qualified representative" also refers to the failure of dialogue within the "bourgeois concept of representation" in the cinema.

"What is needed is dialogue": this statement in the voice-over "commentary" seems to echo our own thoughts as we watch this exasperatingly long, static, and dialogue-less shot. We are impatient to "get into the movie", we are impatient to get on with plot. We wonder why the young couple is lying on the ground and why they are chained together. We wish they would at least regain consciousness enough to start talking to each other so that we could find out, from their dialogue, what is happening – that is, what is happening to *them*. As usual, in the cinema we don't ask ourselves what is happening to us. We don't ask ourselves why a film addresses us in this particular way or that. In fact, we rarely

think of a film as addressing us, or, for that matter, anyone at all. We sit back and accept the tacit understanding that a film is a "reflection of reality" captured in the mirror of that magical "eye of God" that is a movie camera. We sit back passively and wait for a film to lead us by the hand or, more literally, by the heart.

We relinquish our dialogue with the film; and when this happens the film no longer speaks with us, or even to us, but instead speaks *for* us, in our place. And in bourgeois capitalist society, film (like television) speaks the language of big business, which seeks constantly to shove more goods down our gullets, to get us to like being force-fed, to get us desire the very state of affairs which perpetuates our exploited and alienated condition. In letting a film speak for us, we allow our real needs to be distorted into the ersatz needs big business wants us to have. We are accomplices in your betrayal.

What is to be done, then, to get us out of this deplorable situation? As the voice-over speaker in *Vent d'Est* puts it: "Today the question 'what is to be done?' is urgently asked of militant film-makers. It is no longer a question of what path to take; it is a question of what one should do practically on a path that the history of revolutionary struggles has helped us to recognise. To make a film, for example, is to ask oneself the question 'where do we stand'. And what does this question mean for a militant film-maker? It means, first but not exclusively, opening a parenthesis in which we ask ourselves what the history of revolutionary cinema can teach us".

There then follows a most interesting rundown on some of the high points and weak spots of what could be qualified as revolutionary cinema - beginning with the young Eisenstein's admiration for D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance*. Certainly Griffith was a decisive influence on Eisenstein; and, through Eisenstein, on the first great chapter of revolutionary cinema - the Russian silent film. But the "commentator" in *Vent d'Est* asserts that from a revolutionary standpoint this borrowing of technique from the expressive arsenal of a "North American imperialist" (Griffith) eventually did more harm than good, and represents a defeat in the history of revolutionary cinema. As a consequence of this initial ideological error, it is affirmed, Eisenstein confused primary and secondary tasks, and instead of glorifying the struggles of the present, glorified the historic revolt of the sailors of the Battleship *Potemkin*. As a second consequence, in 1929, when he made *The General Line* (also called *The Old and the New*), Eisenstein managed to find new ways of expressing czarist repression, but could only utilize the same old forms to express the process of collectivization and agrarian reform. In his case, it is asserted, the "old" ultimately won out

over the "new" – and, as a consequence, Hollywood found no difficulty in hiring Eisenstein to film revolution in Mexico, while at the same time in Berlin, Dr. Goebbels asked Leni Riefenstahl to make "a Nazi *Potemkin*".

All of this may sound somewhat heretical and perhaps arbitrary, but there is actually a very perceptive argument here if one follows it closely. The same techniques that Griffith used to glorify in retrospect the old racist cause of the Southern whites in the American Civil War were taken over and developed by Eisenstein to glorify in retrospect an already twenty-year-old episode (the mutiny of the Battleship *Potemkin* took place in 1905) – and not a particularly important one at that – in the history of the Russian Revolution. Later, when confronted with the task of dealing with issues of contemporary urgency (collectivization), Eisenstein could only trot out the same – now somewhat older – techniques. Later still, those same techniques were perfectly compatible with the propaganda of the Nazis; and Eisenstein himself was not altogether unjustifiably considered to be "co-optable" by Hollywood.

The problem is that the cinematic forms which Eisenstein inherited from Griffith, and which he then developed, were not sufficiently flexible to deal with the complexities of the ongoing present, but were very well suited to emotionalized, reconstituted documentaries of past history. Moreover, precisely because they emphasized the emotional, "lived", "you are there" aspect of history, it was all too easy for these cinematic forms to be used to stir up people's emotional involvement in even such aberrant doctrines as Hitler's "racial purity" and blind obedience to the Führer.

Next in line for critical scrutiny is Dziga Vertov, in whose name Godard founded his militant film-makers' collective. Vertov is credited with achieving a victory for revolutionary cinema when he declared that "there is no cinema which stands above class, no cinema which stands above class struggle", and that "cinema is only a secondary task in the world struggle for revolutionary liberation". But Vertov is faulted for having forgotten that, in the words of Lenin, "politics commands the economy" – with the result that his film *The Eleventh Year* does not sing the praises of 11 years of sound political leadership at the hands of the dictatorship of the proletariat, but glorifies instead Russia's surging economy and developing industry in exactly the same emotional terms that capitalist propaganda uses to glorify its own economic growth. "It is at this point", *Vent d'Est's* commentator asserts, "that revisionism invaded the Soviet movie screens once and for all".

Next in the rundown of revolutionary cinema is the "false victory" of the early 1960's, when progressive African governments, having achieved their

revolution and kicked out the imperialists, “let them back through the window of the movie camera” by turning over the production of films to the old European and American movie industry – “thereby giving white Christians the right to speak on behalf of blacks and Arabs”. Finally, a victory is claimed for revolutionary cinema in the recent report of Comrade Kiang Tsing³ (wife of Mao), in which the theory of “the royal road of realism” was denounced, along with a denunciation of most of the canons of the old Stalinist “socialist-realism” aesthetics.

Throughout this brief “bird’s-eye view” of revolutionary cinema there runs the unifying thread of the necessity of thinking through very thoroughly the theoretical foundations of one’s cinematic *praxis*. If we (along with Godard) can learn anything from the history of revolutionary cinema, it is clearly that constant self-critical vigilance is necessary if a film-maker is to avoid playing unwittingly into the hands of the opposition. And if a film-maker’s commitment to revolutionary liberation is more than just an emotional identification with the oppressed, then his cinematic practice must address itself to more than just the emotions and identification-projection mechanisms of the audience. If he is firmly convinced (as Godard is) that the process of revolutionary liberation involves far more than just the revenge of the persecuted, and that it offers the concrete possibility of putting an end to persecution (in other words, of creating an objectively more *just* society in which the free development of the individual works for rather than against the free development of his fellow man), then it is the film-maker’s urgent task to create cinematic forms which, themselves, work for rather than against the free development of the spectator, forms which do not manipulate his emotions or his unconscious but which provide him with analytical tool to utilise in dealing with the complexity of the present.

And self-criticism is an integral part of Godard’s analytical cinema, as witnessed by the fact that the second half of *Vent d’Est* is given over to his critique of his own previous efforts at revolutionary film-making. The first and most serious criticism he brings forth is his own previous lack (and present insufficiency) of contact with the masses. (Since he began working collectively with the “Dziga Vertov Group” after May 1968, Godard has made increasingly frequent and fruitful contacts with militant workers’ groups, especially at Issy-les-Moulineaux, outside Paris.) Second, he criticises the “bourgeois-

131 See “Summary of the Forum on the Work in Literature and Art on the Armed Forces with which Lin Piao Entrusted Comrade Kiang Tsing”, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1968.

sociology” approach to cinema, in which the film-maker shows the misery of the masses but does not show their struggles. (While this criticism is made in the commentary, we see a number of shots of shantytown houses and modern high-rise apartment buildings like the ones Godard photographed for *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* – which film he has referred to as “a sociological essay”.) The trouble with this approach – as well as with *cinéma vérité* – is asserted, is that by not showing the struggles of the masses one weakens their ability to struggle; and the implication is that the cinematic image of their misery simply reinforces their own self-image of misery, while the cinematic image of their struggles conversely reinforces their ability to carry on the struggle.

Finally, it is pointed out that contemporary cinema in Russia (“Brezhnev-Mosfilm”) is perfectly interchangeable with contemporary cinema in America (“Nixon-Hollywood”); and, moreover, that the two of them together are perfectly interchangeable with what passes for “progressive” cinema at the avant-garde film festivals throughout Europe. These so-called “liberated” films, it is asserted, are revisionist because they do not question the bourgeois cinema’s relations between image and sound, and because, although they have broken the old bourgeois taboos on sex, drugs, and apocalyptic poetry, they have continued to uphold the most important bourgeois taboo of all – that which prohibits the depicting of the class struggle. (Self-criticism is clearly implicit in this statement too, since the same reproach could be made – and has been made by Godard himself – to all of his own films up to and including *Week-End*.)

But Godard’s self-criticism does not arise out of morbid self-doubt, defeatism, or an urge for self-destruction, as Glauber Rocha argues rather vindictively in his article on *Vent d’Est*. On the contrary, self-criticism plays a large part in Godard’s current cinematic practice (and, for that matter, it always has – at least implicitly) for the simple reason that Godard, along with Mao, considers self-criticism a constructive activity of the highest order. (And in the cinema, as we have seen, this kind of check on the almost unilateral power wielded by the film-maker over his audience is urgently needed.)

Godard’s recent films are politically pointed, to be sure; but although the verbal “commentary” is prominent – if not pre-eminent – the films are not exhortatory. There is nothing demagogic in Godard’s approach either to cinema or to politics. A film like *Vent d’Est* is at the opposite pole in cinematic method from either Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* or Eisenstein’s *Potemkin*. And for that matter, Godard’s *British Sounds*, *Pravda*, and *Vent d’Est* are far removed in

cinematic method from Rocha's *Black God, White Devil*, *Land in Trance*, and *Antonio das Mortes*. There is a strong messianic tone in Rocha's films that is very alien to Godard's way of constructing a film. (It is quite clear, by the way, that Rocha's outstretched arms in *Vent d'Est* – suggesting a parallel between Rocha and Christ – constitutes Godard's ironic comment on the messianic aspects of Rocha's film style.)

And while both Rocha and Godard are committed to the worldwide struggle for revolutionary liberation, they clearly have very divergent opinions about how revolution can develop and how cinema can contribute to that development. Rocha takes the "spontaneous" approach and largely discounts the importance of theoretical concerns, which he considers mere "auxiliaries" to the spontaneous energy of the masses. He has expressed his belief that: "The true revolutionaries in South America are individuals, suffering personalities, who are not involved in theoretical problems... the provocation to violence, the contact with bitter reality that may eventually produce violent change in South America, this upheaval can come only from individual people who have suffered themselves and who have realised that a need for change is present – not for theoretical reasons but because of personal agony".⁴ And Rocha emphasizes his belief that the real strength of the South American masses lies in *mysticism*, in "an emotional, Dionysiac behavior" which he sees as arising from a mixture of Catholicism and African religions. The energy which has its source in mysticism, Rocha argues, is what will ultimately lead the people to resist oppression – and it is this emotional energy Rocha seeks to tap in his films.

Godard, on the other hand, rejects the emotional approach as one which plays into the hand of the enemy and seeks to combat mystification in any form, whether from the right or the left. While there is no indication that Godard underestimates the importance of the agonised personal experience of oppression as a starting-point for the development of revolutionary consciousness, he clearly takes the position that solidly developed organisation on sound theoretical foundations is needed if the revolutionary movement is to advance beyond the stage of abortive, short-lived, "spontaneous" uprisings (like the May 1968 events in France).

And in emphasizing the theoretical struggle, Godard follows in the path of no less a practical revolutionary than Lenin himself, who in his pamphlet entitled *What*

141 Quoted from "The Way to Make a Future: A Conversation with Glauber Rocha", by Gordon Hitchens. *Film Quarterly*, Fall 1970.

Is To Be Done? (echoes of which abound in *Vent d'Est*), roundly castigated the "cult of spontaneity" and pointed out that "any cult of spontaneity, any weakening of the 'element of lucid awareness'... signifies in itself – and whether one wants it this way or not is immaterial – a reinforcing of the influence of bourgeois ideology" (Italics are Lenin's) ⁵. Or, as Lenin puts it a few lines further on: "The problem poses itself in these terms and in no other: bourgeois ideology or socialist ideology. There is no middle ground (for humanity has never set up a 'third' ideology; and, in any case, where society is torn by class struggle, there could never be an ideology above and beyond class)". And, later, "But why – asks the reader – does the spontaneous movement, which tends towards the direction of the least effort, lead precisely to domination by bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that, chronologically, bourgeois ideology is much older than socialist ideology, that it is much more thoroughly elaborated, and that it possesses infinitely more means of diffusion". And, finally, "The greater the spontaneous spirit of the masses, and the more the movement is widespread, then all the more urgent is the necessity of the utmost lucidity in our theoretical work and our organizing". ⁶

Lest anyone be tempted, by the way, to jump to the conclusion (one which Rocha seems to encourage in his article on *Vent d'Est*) that the differences of opinion on revolutionary strategy between Godard and Rocha are simply the result of cultural differences between the European world-view and that of the Third World, it should be pointed out that even in the South American cinema there is nowhere unanimous support for the spontaneous "approach". South American film-makers are increasingly following the lead of Argentine film-maker Fernando Solanas (*La hora de los hornos*) in calling for an intensification of the theoretical struggle at the level of ideology.

It must be understood, however, that Rocha has a legitimate gripe when he complains of the flood of imitation-Godard monstrosities being turned out by self-

⁵ LÉNIN, *Que faire?* Editions Sociales, Paris, 1969. All translations from the French edition are by the present author.

⁶ This latter statement comes closest to Lenin's later qualification of the position adopted in *What Is to Be Done?* – which position, as he indicated, was a tactical response arising from a concrete analysis of a concrete situation (the 1902 squabbles among diverse factions of the left). Later, when the potential dangers of the spontaneous position were no longer as much of a threat to the revolution, Lenin toned down the attack on spontaneity and called for a more dialectical approach of "organised spontaneity and spontaneous organisation". (For excellent material on this, see the special Lenin-Hegel issue of *Radical America*, September-October, 1970.)

indulgent film students in the Third World and everywhere. But the blame is hardly Godard's. (Does anyone doubt for a moment that these same students would be turning out self-indulgent monstrosities whether Godard existed or not?) Moreover, if there is anything which could effectively combat the sort of mindless self-indulgence which characterizes not only most student films but quite simply most films in general, surely it is very thorough, resolute and self-disciplined *theoretical praxis* embodied by the films of Jean-Luc Godard.

- I use the expression *theoretical praxis* quite pointedly, for I want to emphasise that *theory* and *practice* are by no means mutually exclusive. To illustrate what I mean, let us pick up once more the crossroads metaphor. Godard's path – which, as he points out, is simply the path which study of the history of revolutionary cinema has helped him to recognise – is the path of creating the theoretical foundations of revolutionary cinema within the day-to-day practice of making films. The real dilemma for film-makers today is not a choice between theory and practice. The act of making a film necessarily combines both – and this is true whether one makes films in the Third World, in Russia, or the West.
- In *Vent d'Est's* “crossroads” sequence, there is even a strong visual suggestion that the three-way intersection is simply the point where two paths – that of the Third World and that of the European woman with a movie-camera has traveled up to this point – converge and join together in what is really one big ongoing path of “aesthetic adventure and philosophical inquiry”; which, by necessity, combines both theory and practice.

José Carlos Avellar

Vento, barravento
[Glauber and Godard at the gates of the Lumière factory]

The title of the film, as it appears on the screen, is a mixture of Italian and French: *Vento Le Vent d'Est dell'Est*. This written form, one word after the other and all with the same graphic styling, may suggest a difficulty in reading that in reality does not occur in the presentation of the title for *Vent d'Est*. The title card for the film favours the name written in French, in the centre of the picture and in large red letters, framed by the line at the top of the screen with the word *Vento*, in smaller and black letters, and the line at the bottom of the screen, again in smaller, black letters with the wording *dell'Est*. No difficulty in the reading, but this refusal to reduce the Italian title to a mere subtitle translating the original name of this French-Italian production is a way of making the viewer read them both at once, Italian and French, one inside the other.

The title card with this lettering appears only briefly. Soon we see the first image of the film itself, the opening scene for the narration, and this follows the same style of composition as the lettering. It also demands a simultaneous reading: the image speaks one language, and the sound speaks another. We see a couple laying on the grass in a park, we hear a discussion about a strike. Like in the title presentation, a discussion in French (“La grève”, says a man’s voice) and in Italian (“Sciopero”, says the voice of a woman).

The viewer may imagine that the voice informing us about the strike belongs to the woman laying on the grass in the park, that what we hear is her inner voice, thinking about something that had happened there, at the house in the park, or that we are hearing a conversation, the sound coming before the image, which would be made clear later.

So, it is the woman lying in the park talking about a trip she had made to visit her father’s family home, as was her habit in the month of May:

saying that the house was away from the city, in the middle of a park;
that they have dinner every day at eight o'clock sharp;
that one Friday her uncle didn't show up;
that they waited all night for him;
that on Saturday, at around midday, they found out that the uncle was being held captive by the striking workers in his office at the factory;
and that, on the night of that same Saturday, she had walked in on a conversation between her father (she calls him *dad*) and her other uncle (whom she calls *uncle Sam*) about the strike.

The viewer may imagine a fusion between the image and the sound, establish an immediate relationship between what he/she sees (a couple laying on the grass, shown upside down in the frame) and hears (a woman's voice saying that she heard *dad* say to *uncle Sam* that the workers were out on strike), as if the image and the sound ran, as they normally do in films, side by side, advancing in the same direction, following the same path. But it is not exactly this relationship that *Vent d'Est* proposes: image and sound tell different stories, they speak different languages, they follow different paths; what we hear is not the inner voice of the woman laying beside the man on the grass. We see/hear an image that is only a voice. It tells us that the uncle, on a Friday in May, didn't come home for dinner: he was held captive by striking workers. We see/hear an image that is only visual, with no words, with no sound whatsoever that tells us of a couple lying on the grass in a park, just the way a painting or a photograph usually tells us something. The film invites us to follow, simultaneously, one story and the other: the couple relaxing on the grass has no connection whatsoever to do with the discussion about the strike.

That is to say, it's not *quite* like that, there is a relationship: in the same way that the strike changed the annual May trip and the daily eight o'clock dinner, the strike also changed the relationship between sound and image in this film. One appears to be in conflict with the other: action on the soundtrack and strike in the image; using one conflict to illustrate another. What one seeks, therefore (using the words of Glauber's Corisco in *Black God White Devil*), is to untide the tidy, or (as Glauber's Paulo Martins shouts in *Land Entranced*), let the

wagon roll on its own. Image and sound in *Vent d'Est* are articulated in the same way that the workers articulate themselves in a strike.

La grève: in the image of the couple in the park everything is still – only the vegetation sways gently in the (east?) wind.

Sciopero: the conversation on the soundtrack goes on animatedly and regardless of what is happening in the image – even when this image moves slightly.

What the sound is telling us begins to be revealed in the long opening sequence, goes through the following scene, in which a man armed with a rifle passes in front of a country house, and continues in the third scene, in counterpoint to the couple in the park. Absolutely fixed images; the only thing that really moves in them is the sound, a discussion about the condition of the workers (not as bad as it used to be, they can now eat chicken every weekend), about the unions, about the workers' representatives, about representation and about the cinema, which should follow the paths of which the history of the revolutionary struggles teaches us to be aware.

What the image tells us often appears to be something that usually happens before (actors putting on make-up for the scene) or after a film (a reflection about what the cinema is and how a film should be made): a character paints his face with vivid colours – yellow, green, blue, red; someone out of the scene throws red paint over the characters; lettering appears saying “what can we do?” or warning that “this is not a just image, it is just an image”. We see cards that tell us nothing, that simply cloak the scenes in black or red, and images that neither tell us nor show us anything. The picture is scratched out and scribbled on, the word is cut off in the middle or drowned out by a racket, everyone is shouting at the same time. In the place of a film, something like an assembly of striking workers occurs and effectively, at a certain point, the whole crew gathers together – the camera and the microphone open to all the members of the crew interrupt the narrative – in order to discuss how the next sequence should be filmed.

In 1968, almost simultaneously and also in 16 mm (but in black and white), Glauber was to make a non-commercial film (cinema on strike?): *Cancer*. “I’m not going to send it to festivals nor am I going to show it in cinemas”, he said to Peruvian magazine *Hablemos de Cine*. “My pleasure was in simply making the film and I suppose that perhaps what is on the film is of no importance. I didn’t make it in order to show it; maybe I will show it, but I haven’t finished it yet, it still needs editing”. Speaking of *Cancer* (“It was made to show that in cinema there is not a single path. The path of cinema is all paths”), speaking of the film that he only got around to finishing in 1972, Glauber appears to be describing Godard’s *Vent d’Est*. “It has no story”; it studies “the duration of the cinematographic take”; it

experiments with “the virtual elimination of editing, when there is a constant verbal and psychological action within a single take”.

A film on strike against the model of production of the great industry.

The idea has been around since *Black God White Devil*, since *Hunger Aesthetics*: cinema at the service of important causes of its time, obliged to cut itself away from the industry, “because the commitment of industrial cinema is to lies and exploitation”. It passes through *Land Entranced*, via reflections on “the character of a true film director” (second chapter of *Cinema moderno, cinema novo*, José Álvaro Editor, Rio de Janeiro, 1966): the film director “is not measured, above all, by his resistance in the face of the efforts of the industry. Directors do not live by film alone, but also by the silences to which he is forced in order to maintain his dignity”. This idea becomes more radical later on, shortly after *Der leone have sept heads* and *Severed Heads*, and shortly before *Claro*. Glauber said that in the future cinema would be light, sound, delirium; that the viewers should watch a film “as if they were in bed, at a party, in a strike or in a revolution”, and declared that he was on strike: “like a worker at the factory gates”, fighting for “the right to make political films, with no commercial or professional commitments involved”. On strike: “I haven’t filmed anything for a year and a half, among other reasons because left-wing cinema is going through a terrible crisis and because the commercial and financial relationships that exist in film production have become a trap” (June 1972, statement published in *Cuba internacional*, in *Afrique-Asie* and in *Écran*).

Cinema on strike: *Vent d’Est* is nothing like a film and that’s just what Godard wanted: to join the workers, stage a walk-out at the Lumière factory.

In December of 1970 (in a statement to the *Cinéma 70* magazine), Godard told of how he met Jean-Pierre Gorin, after May of 1968. “Two people, one coming from mainstream cinema, the other a militant bent on making films as a political duty. He wanted to theorise what happened in May and go on from there to practice it, and I wanted to attach myself to someone who was not from the world of cinema. In summary, one wanted to make films and the other wanted to stop making films. It was about constructing a new unit made from two opposites, in keeping with the Marxist concept, and from there attempting to construct a new cell group – not to make political cinema, but to make political cinema politically, which was very different from what the militant film makers of the time were doing”. From this was born the Dziga Vertov Group, which produced six films between 1969 and 1971. The name Dziga Vertov was chosen not because there was an intention of using his programme, but because the group wanted to promote it “as a standard-bearer in relation to Eisenstein,

who in our view was a revisionist film maker". For Vertov what was needed to be done was to "simply open people's eyes and show the world in the name of the proletarian dictatorship".

Political cinema: Vento (Vertov)? Barravento (Eisenstein)? Or one thing and the other?

In the gap between *Land Entranced* ("Não me interessam as flores do estilo/ Como por dia mil notícias amargas/ Que definem o mundo em que vivo" – I have no interest in the flowers of style/ I eat a thousand pieces of bad news per day/ which define the world in which I live) and *Der leone have sept heads* ("Down with colonialism! Down with colonialism! Down with colonialism!"),

in dialogue with what begins to take shape in *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* ("as we break down to zero it is from there that we must depart"),

and in *La Chinoise* ("fifty years after the October revolution, American cinema reigns over cinema from the rest of the world. There is not much to add to this state of things. Except, on our modest scale, we should create two or three Vietnams in the middle of the immense Hollywood-Cinecitta-Mosfilm-Pinewood-etc empire, and this both economically and aesthetically, I mean fighting on two fronts, creating national, free, brotherly, comradely and friendly cinemas"),

in dialogue also with the Latin-American tempo (Fanon cited by Solanas in *La hora de los homos*: "Every viewer is either a coward or a traitor"),

thinking on the role of the Latin-American intellectual ("The first thing he has to do is to deny himself completely, demystify himself completely, and let go of this role as interpreter, of historical critic with no real, political participation in history. The only way for him to revolutionise himself is to demystify himself and make political thought and political action into an integrated entity"),

Glauber proposed a political cinema that "does not intend to inform through logic", marked by poetical irreverence, "by the introduction of the anarchic plane", by "images forbidden in the bourgeois context", in order to destroy all "that which the viewer accepts as being normal".

How does one make a political film? By filming politically, "without reducing people to sociopolitical schemes":

It is not enough to simply register "rallies, wars, strikes and protests to make a political film. This is positive and useful. Such films can be efficient, just as some

literary works can be politically efficient. To what extent does a purely political essay, published in a magazine with a small circulation, contribute to the revolution? I don't know. The impossibility of answering these questions is born of the impossibility of the questions themselves. The usefulness of art is an old issue. This debate results from a certain typically intellectual feeling of guilt, from European intellectuals and Third World intellectuals, a feeling of guilt that is more Christian than Marxist. In certain historical moments, a film may have value for agitation and propaganda, but it can only be efficient at a given time and in very special circumstances. For film buffs and for the public in general the cinema is above all an oneiric provocateur: the public seeks in films an oneiric vision of reality, even in more realistic films. The intellectual is looking for something that corresponds to his obsessions. The cinema, deep down, is a manifestation of play. In terms of political efficiency, we should highlight Godard and Straub, who make political films that on an immediate level are inefficient" because they propose "a revolutionary poetry, the only one capable of changing consciences".

Thinking of the revolution as an aesthetic: in the same way that Buñuel is essential to the underdeveloped world, "for the developed world it is more than necessary to have an 'anarcocratic' spirit like that of Godard", who starts his cinema "at the point where Joyce left off with his writing. The greatest moments of Joyce tend towards impossible figurativeness: the next step is taken by Godard". He expresses "the most things in the least amount of time", he proposes an "action in tandem with Joyce" and a meeting of "sociology with fiction, of anthropology with poetry, of Shakespeare with science-fiction, of painting with philosophy". He speaks of a Godard who is "as humble as St. Francis of Assisi, embarrassed by his geniality, apologizing to everyone" and says that in his presence, "a thin, balding, forty-year-old man, I feel like a fond aunt who's embarrassed to give a sweet to an unhappy nephew. This image is trite, but Godard arouses a great feeling of affection. Now, it is no longer trite: it is the same thing as seeing Bach or Michelangelo eating spaghetti and down in the dumps feeling incapable of painting the Sistine Chapel or composing the 'Actus Tragicus'".

For Glauber, Godard therefore resumed, shortly after May of 1968, "all of the questions facing today's European intellectual: is it worth making art? The issue of the usefulness of art is an old one but it's currently in fashion. And in cinema Godard is the walking crisis itself".

Between Glauber and Godard an unplanned dialogue/debate is established, organized spontaneously, in order to consider the cinema as it began to be made around the ideas of the Hunger Aesthetic, of Cine Imperfecto, of Tercer Cine, of

Cine Junto al Pueblo, around the idea of a (the title of the French magazine sums it up well) *Cinéthique*.

Godard, taking Vertov as a standard and repeating that there was no sense in making films as spectacles or authorial films:

“It is necessary to abandon the idea of making films and to relearn the language. During the projection of a militant film, the screen is simply a blackboard or a classroom wall that offers a concrete analysis of a concrete situation.”

Glauber, closer to the tradition of Eisenstein and insisting that making art makes sense in any third world country:

“Pity the underdeveloped country that has no strong and passionately national artistic expression because, without its art, it is weakened (to have its mind colonized), and this is the more dangerous extension of economic colonisation”.

This unplanned dialogue/debate led to the natural meeting of the two at a road junction in *Vent d'Est*. Glauber (in a footnote to an interview for *Cahiers du Cinéma* in July of 1969) sums up the encounter and the filming of the scene in which Godard asks “which are the paths of cinema and he himself indicates the answer: that way is the unknown cinema of aesthetic adventure and philosophical speculation, this way is the cinema of the Third World”. He says:

“Italy. Godard is filming a western and he asks me about the direction of political cinema. On the first day I stand in front of the camera with my arms open and indicate a direction towards the unknown and to adventure, and I show another direction for the cinema of the Third World. But as Godard wanted to show the scene a second time, I sang that you had to be alert and strong because we have no time to fear death, and later the character who asked me the path of political cinema heads towards the path of the Third World and then comes back behind me and goes towards adventure and the unknown. I didn't repeat the speech of the first day of shooting but sang that everything is dangerous, divine and wonderful”.

Later (in a text for *Manchete* magazine, in January of 1970), he tells more about his participation in the “western in colour written by Cohn-Bendit and directed by Jean-Luc Godard and featuring Gian Maria Volonté”; he talks about the gossip that surrounded the film, “I met a young man who told me: Did you know? In Godard's western there are two horses reciting Mao!”; he says that Godard asked “to help him destroy cinema, so I told him I was into something else, that

my thing was to build cinema in Brazil and the Third World"; and that he asked whether he wanted to do a scene for *Vent d'Est* – "I, who am quick on the uptake and have a built in doubt meter, tell him to ease up since I'm only there to flirt"; for the scene, he says, "he asks me what are the paths of cinema and he indicates the answer himself: that way is the unknown cinema of the aesthetic adventure and the philosophical spectacle (etc.); this way is the cinema of the Third World".

The scene begins with Glauber, with open arms standing at a road junction, fixed scene, singing in Portuguese:

"Atenção: é preciso estar atento e forte. Não temos tempo de temer a morte".

(Attention: we have to be alert and strong. There is no time to fear death.)

A woman's voice says softly, in French – while Glauber sings over and over that we have to be alert and strong –, that cinema should follow the path the history of the revolutionary struggles have taught us. So as to know exactly where to find this path, she decides to ask the Third World cinema. From the back of the scene comes a girl with a camera who asks Glauber in French: "Sorry to interrupt your class struggle, but it's important: what is the path of political cinema?" Glauber responds in Portuguese: he points in a direction and says that that way is the cinema of the unknown, of the aesthetic adventure. He points in another direction and says that that way is the way of the cinema of the Third World, a cinema that is dangerous, divine and wonderful, the victim of imperialist repression and oppression, a cinema that is dangerous, divine and wonderful and which, in the case of Brazil, needs to produce 300 filmmakers per year in order to make 600 films per year.

The question – communicating the cinema via politics and/or communicating politics via cinema – did not arise at that time, but was the subject of lively debate on this picket line: *Cancer* and *Vent d'Est* at the gates of the factory of dreams. The intellectual abandoning his privileged position and integrating with the political process, as Glauber wished. The militant influencing the cinema and being influenced by it in return, as Godard wished. The issue was debated in much the same way as it was represented by Godard in the scene filmed with Glauber. It was about asking the Third World which direction political cinema should take; it was about advancing simultaneously down the two paths: that of aesthetic adventure and that of the dangerous, divine and wonderful cinema of the Third World.

When Glauber, in *Hunger Aesthetics*, speaks of the need to separate useful art (that is, useful to the political activism of the revolutionary art that is launched at the opening of new discussions) from revolutionary art, which, in his opinion,

should not only act on an immediately political level, but also promote philosophical speculation and represent an impossibility of understanding to the dominating reason (in such a way that this reason denies itself and devours itself trying to comprehend it)... Well, when Glauber does so, he appears to be repeating what Godard used to say on behalf of the Dziga Vertov Group – or vice-versa, Godard appears to repeat the words of Glauber when he says that it is important to make political films (which is what everyone does, with a greater or lesser degree of conscience) in a political manner (which is what few seem able to do). Anyone who expresses new contents must express new forms, anyone who expresses new forms must express new relationships between form and content. In order to find new answers, we should learn to ask in a different way, otherwise, in cinema or in any other social struggle, we will continue to answer what are entirely new questions in the same old way. They were saying the same thing, even when they seemed to be saying the opposite: destroy cinema, says one; build cinema in Brazil and in the Third World, says another. It's as if they were saying that it is necessary to fight on two fronts, to create national cinemas that are free, brotherly, comradely and friendly; that the path of cinema is all paths: and that, above all else, workers who are committed to participating in the political process should set up a picket line at the factory gates and cry out to the four winds: *Strike!*



Letter to Jean-Pierre and Jean-Luc

Kent Jones

Greetings to you both, from the year 2004, 32 years after your letter to the “actress” and “militant” known as Jane Fonda. Let’s talk about your infamous, “abnormal” (per John Simon, who screamed that epithet as he stormed out of your New York Film Festival press conference), 52-minute meditation on that notorious photo of “Hanoi Jane” giving aid and comfort to the enemy.

Ecstasy

“There is a point where in a certain state of mind the spirit gets back the overwhelming experience of matter,” said Jean-Pierre Gorin in a 1974 interview with *Jump Cut*. “Then you are at a point where there is no such thing as good and bad, despair and joy. You’re beyond those contradictions, and everything is complete and total experience.” In the years immediately following *Letter to Jane*, when people spoke of it at all – which was rarely – the ecstasy of materialism was the last thing on their minds. The Dziga Vertov Group films in general, and *Letter to Jane* in particular (“shot”, recorded, and mixed in record time), were spoken of as the ultimate in *un*-cinema, *un*-pleasure, a little too much for even the most rigorous downtown New York aesthete. On the one hand, the movies were too “political” for the avant-garde; on the other hand, they were too removed from true nuts-and-bolts politics – too “cinematic” – for the politically engaged.

“We made this film in the same way that you’d make a can opener.”

Gorin may have been talking about another Vertov Group movie, but he could just as well have been

describing this one. A movie made without grand ambitions, as a political audio-visual tool, a cultural additive, like those chemical compounds that strip away multiple layers of paint to get to the original wood beneath. But 30 years later, it's the ecstasy of the enterprise that seems most striking. Gorin often refers to Gilles Deleuze's "rhizomatic" theorizing, with its lack of ultimate conclusiveness, its substitution of a repressed "therefore" with an euphoric "and... and... and..." While *Letter to Jane* seems to boil down about a conclusive endpoint – that any activity for Westerners thinking about Vietnam in 1972 *other* than listening to the Vietnamese and understanding the kind of peace *they* wanted is nothing more than a masquerade – it plays as anything but a logically unfolding presentation. Rather than digging deeper and deeper, it just keeps accumulating insights (the look on Jane Fonda's face echoing the compassionate look originated by her father in *The Grapes of Wrath*), solving puzzles (why the in-focus actress is ideologically fuzzy, while the out-of-focus Vietnamese man is, like the American right, ideologically clear), and untangling capitalist knots (a photograph can hide more than it reveals, depending on how it's published and positioned). "You can't understand Marx if you don't see that this guy describing the capitalist machine was jerking off all the time", said Gorin in the *Jump Cut* interview. "He loved putting all the elements together, and it's very important to love what you're doing." Thirty-two years after the fact, you don't come away from this movie feeling like you've seen a dry academic inquiry, but an ecstatic engagement with the present. It must be said the pleasure is mostly yours, but we get our share of it too.

Two foreigners

When I listen to the track of *Letter to Jane* – and this is a movie that you have to *listen* to, above all else – I'm aware of the fact that I'm hearing two roles being played, acted out before the microphone for a special occasion: a film designed to "explain" another film (*Tout va bien*) to American audiences. What roles are you guys playing? Two "Marxist" intellectuals running off at the mouth? Two Europeans seeing through an American? Two men haranguing a woman? All of the above. One might also throw in: two judges at a Stalinist show trial (as James Monaco pointed out in *The New Wave*); two shamuses in a verbal show-down with the perp before calling the cops; two apparatchiks sent from head-



quarters to give their high-profile comrades a good talking-to, right out of Chester Hime's undervalued novel *Lonely Crusade*. And the idea of how an American audience should be spoken to, the kind of "straight" talk they might respond to, now seems like a wonderfully dated artifact of Nixon-era America. For instance, the actress's look of compassion as she's supposedly listening to the Vietnamese peasants is "borrowed, principal and interest, from the New Deal". As if you were a couple of insurance men who had just stopped in for a drink at the corner bar after a hard day's work studying the latest actuarial tables.

A woman is a woman is a woman

"Why a letter to Jane?" I was thinking as I was watching the film again.

"Why not a letter to Yves?" And then, of course, the film – or you – answered me: because Yves Montand was never photographed when he went to Chile. At least not symbolically. And you even address the question of why two guys are, once more, scolding a woman. In 1972, all roads led back to Vietnam and how to further the cause of the Vietnamese people. More than anyone else, it was Fonda who gave intentions, her sense of strategy, and the ultimate impact of her gesture were open to the kind of inquiry you undertook here. Fair enough.

But the question kept nagging me anyway. Why not simply make an interrogation of this photograph, without the direct address? The level of scrutiny accorded to the photo, taken by Gerard Guillaume and published in *L'Express*, seems altogether immaterial to a genuine dialogue with the woman of whom it was taken. Thirty-two years later, it feels like Jane – "Hanoi Jane," the patron saint of militant American leftism; Jane, your former star, who almost backed out of your picture; Jane, as in "the function of Jane," the embodiment of celebrity leftism – is what got your motor running. Or maybe the two-guys-ganging-up-on-a-girl act was just that, another role being played. I think I get it: the American right wing is "clear" and the American left is "hazy," meaning that the right wing is "masculine" and decisive while the left wing is "feminine" and skittish. A master stroke, then, to take on the sensitive, caring face of the "woman" at the heart of leftism, all emotion and no thought. Once you do the conceptual calculus, it feels like a terrific idea.

And then, when you think about it again, it's still two guys ganging up on a girl.

Plus ça change

So, 32 years later, the U.S. is once again at war for dubious reasons. Once again, the country is polarized. Once again, perhaps more forcefully than in 1972, the American right wing is ascendant. One of you is now an American resident of long standing. The other of you is holed up in Switzerland. Both of you remain great filmmakers.

Your can opener of a movie has now been fixed in time. It has been given the status of “curio” – a work that is a “product of its era” before it is anything else. Ready to be boxed up and wedged into the back of the historical closet.

We have endless ways of sealing ourselves off in our own present, giving the past so many coats of shellac that we can't even touch its actual surface. As Gorin's old friend and colleague Raymond Durnat once said, doesn't the fact that something has become “dated” make it more interesting? Why should we kiss off the time-bound?

Seeing your movie again after all these years, after the restless college students who watched it in 1972 have gone gray, after McNamara has been immortalized by Errol Morris, after Jane has metamorphosed from antiwar militant to liberal politician's wife to Hollywood's Best Actress to Exercise Queen to billionaire patrician's wife to remote superstar of yesteryear, after Mr. Gorbachev tore down that wall, after Reagan inaugurated the process that turned the country into a seemingly permanent fantasy of itself, after every market imaginable has been freed, I find that it speaks more powerfully *through* its pastness and datedness than it did when it was wet from the lab.

What is it about your little addendum of a film? Is it the fact that it is so low-rent, so made-from-hunger, at a time when all the emphasis and energy in cinema is being expended on getting a presentable surface? Is it the refreshingly unrepentant tone of two Marxist spielers taking it upon themselves to lecture the audience, without humility or self-justification? Is it the fact that you saw the urgency in reading images and the manner in which they're disseminated (taking Barthes's elegant analysis to rapturous heights), perhaps unconsciously anticipating the sea of visual information in which we now swim – or sink? Is it the fact that you're stating the rock-solid truth of the postcolonial word, the one we seem to be ignoring once again in Iraq, that the inhabitants of the country in question must be the ones who decide their own collective future? Is it the way you hone in on that patented compassionate regard, which in the intervening years has moved from movies to television and that now adorns mugs as various

as Diane Sawyer's, Oprah Winfrey's and Michael Moore's?
It's all those things. And it's your swift assessment of liberal self-regard, which you characterize thusly: "producing a good conscience for ourselves in such a cheap way." Which we Westerners of all political stripes can't seem to stop doing, or having done on our behalf. And which the word can ill afford.

See you in another 32 years – when it will be time to open a few more cans.



In general, when one receives films from a distributor, they are accompanied by technical notes with the credits for the people involved in the making of these films. One may choose to follow these or to resort to research material in books about the films. Naturally, one can not expect too much in this sense from the older films, but nevertheless, down the years the credits have become consensual and are the subject of material that is used for research and quotations. Unless some researcher reveals something new about an unexpected participation, the credits are usually maintained. In the case of the Dziga Vertov Group, two problems were encountered, since Gaumont themselves, responsible for the distribution and publicity of the films, do not have these notes. The first problem relates to the necessary time for the films to become consensual, since the bibliography available on the Group is still fairly unreliable and it is only recently that it has become possible to see the films collectively. The second problem relates to the nature of the Group itself, since, as the proposal was to work in conjunction, many of the films bear no signature, and are merely mentioned in books as belonging to the Dziga Vertov Group.

Taking the team apart, as was done with the technical notes below, may seem to be a contradiction to the purposes of the Group. But, firstly, it was necessary to decide which credits were to be published in the limited space available in the publicity material. The credits found in books diverge to a great extent and the only fixed reference is the name of Jean-Luc Godard. If they were to be purely viewed under the collective name of the Dziga Vertov Group, it would be necessary to name all of the participants in the same, and they did not work homogeneously. In fact sometimes they did not even finish the particular films in which they were participating. Therefore,

it was decided to publish only what appeared to be most coherent and most recurrent in the publicity material, which needed to be kept short. However, given this more generous amount of space, it was chosen to publish the research that was carried out with regard to the credits and synopses, so as to shed more light on the history of the Group itself, remembering that their films were made over a four-year period counting from *Un film comme les autres* to *Letter to Jane*, and often simultaneously.

The main references for the credits are indicated by the initials of the authors of books concerning the filmography of Godard and this phase of his film making. Although Colin MacCabe was responsible for publishing an important book at the start of the eighties regarding this phase of Godard's life, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, the filmography published with technical details is incipient, but the filmography published in his more recent book *Godard: a portrait of an artist at seventy* is much more consistent and detailed. Also, MacCabe is a referential author for this period in the filmography of Godard. This book, published in 2003, was used for reference in the research. The guide compiled by Julia Lesage is a known reference containing details of credits and synopses, as well as the MoMA catalogue, which produced a special exhibition of the films of Jean-Luc Godard in the 1990's. The slightly more recent book by Dixon also presented details that were not mentioned by either MacCabe or Lesage. Some of the historical references were taken from the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, from the book *Film and Revolution* by James MacBean, from the DVD catalogue containing *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*, launched by the Criterion Collection and from the Internet database IMDb.

Julia Lesage, *Jean-Luc Godard: A guide to references and resources* = JL

Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Portrait of an artist at seventy* = CM

Catalogue of the Jean-Luc Godard film exhibition produced by the Museum of Modern Art, *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image* = MoMA

Wheeler Dixon, *The films of Jean-Luc Godard* = WD

DVD of *Tout va bien* containing *Letter to Jane* = DVD

Internet Movie Database = IMDb

A film like any other

Un film comme les autres

France, 1968, 100 min, 16 mm, B&W and Colour

Ciné-tracts filmed in Paris in May, 1968 by Jean-Luc Godard. The group of youths meets on a lawn in Flins in July and August of 1968

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (JL)

Jean-Luc Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group (MOMA)

Jean-Luc Godard with the ARC Group and Jacques Kébadian (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group - Godard and Gorin (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dziga Vertov Group (IMDb)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard and Dziga Vertov Group (MoMA)

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dziga Vertov Group (IMDb)

Cinematography

William Lubtchansky (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard and Dziga Vertov Group (MoMA)

Jean-Luc Godard (IMDb)

Film editing

Christine Aya (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard and Dziga Vertov Group (MoMA, IMDb)

Cast

Three students from Nanterre, two workers from the Renault factory and the voice of Godard on the soundtrack (CM, WD)

During the year of 1968, Godard produced a series of *ciné-tracts*, small three-minute documents filmed in 16 mm, black and white, and edited on the camera itself. Apart from Godard, film makers such as Alain Resnais and Chris Marker also produced *ciné-tracts* in the intention of forming a collective work with no directors' signature. It was all about filming rallies, protest marches and discussions with political aims. During the month of May, specifically, Godard filmed students in Nanterre and workers discussing the political situation of the times.

Un film comme les autres made use of this material. The colour film shows an extensive political discussion involving a group of young people sitting on the grass in some unnamed place. The camera shows the group from behind, without distinguishing faces for a long time. The film is gradually intersected by the *ciné-tracts* – which Godard later came to name “film-tracts” – showing cars being burnt, groups of protesters, the police arresting people at protests, Daniel Cohn-Bendit speaking at a student rally, students mimeographing pamphlets, as well as workers on strike.

The soundtrack works with fusions of local sounds, dialogues and slogans in French and English and serves, if not to initiate, then at least to strengthen, a frequent dialectic intervention between image and sound in the previous films of the Dziga Vertov Group. Gradually the viewer is able to identify the characters, but identifies them by their voices. They discuss the role of the communist party, of the workers' organisations and also of the spectacle oriented society. However, they do not agree on all of the issues and no point of view is favoured. There are two lines of discourse: that of the dialogue within the group and another in the form of a voice-over, and there are two images: one in colour, pastoral and quiet, versus one in black and white, agitated and in conflict.

Colin MacCabe does not present *Un film comme les autres* as being the work of the Dziga Vertov Group, but rather as being that of Godard and the ARC Group (Atelier de recherche cinématographique) in his latest book *Godard: Portrait of an Artist at Seventy*. However, in his previous book *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics*, published in 1980, he credits the film to the Dziga Vertov Group and the “Etats Généraux du Cinéma”. In reality, the film was produced with neither any component of the Group, nor exactly with the proposals of the Dziga Vertov Group. But, it may be considered a precursor of the Group in as much as that it was designed to be a joint effort with no single named author.

This film-documentary became famous because Godard left a message for the projectionist to “flip a coin” to define which of the rolls was to be shown first, following a showing at the Lincoln Center in New York, in December 1968, where only a hundred members of an audience that began as one thousand remained to see the film.

British Sounds (or See you at Mao)

France, 1969, 52 min, 16 mm, Colour

Filmed in England in February or March of 1969. Produced by London Weekend Television

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (CM)

Jean-Luc Godard (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Henri Roger (MoMA, IMDb)

Jean-Luc Godard, together with Jean-Henri Roger in the name of the Dziga Vertov Group (JL)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Henri Roger (MoMA, CM, IMDb)

Jean-Luc Godard (WD, JL)

Research

Mo Teitelbaum (JL)

Cinematography

Charles Stewart (JL)

Sound

Fred Sharp (JL)

Sound mixing

Antoine Bonfanti (CM)

Film editing

Christine Aya (CM) (MacCabe affirms that Kozmian was only given a mention because Godard had to give some credit to the British crew. *Godard*, p. 413, n. 36)

Elizabeth Kozmian (MoMA, WD, JL)

Cast

Students from Oxford, students from Essex and a group of militant workers from Dagenham; voice of Godard on the soundtrack and workers at the GM factory.

It was only in retrospect that *British Sounds* only came to be recognised as the work of the Dziga Vertov Group, thus leading it to be considered as the first film of the series. Made in England, the film consists of six long sequences: an assembly line at a car factory; a naked woman in her home; a television speech made by a young man, intersected with silent scenes, in colour, of workers; workers in a flat talking about their working conditions; university students making posters and writing revolutionary songs and, finally, a bloody hand inching its way towards a red flag. The sound track mixes the repetitive sounds of the assembly line and texts read as a voice-over in order to reflect the alienation of the workers within the process of reproduction.

At first, the flag being torn from within, the signs of the revolution in the form of a bloody fist grasping for the red flag and the students making up revolutionary songs appear to be to reminiscent of pamphlets for the modern eye. At the same time, one is able to perceive the increasingly intense distancing of the camera's eye, which is simultaneously within and without and which is present in each of the films made by the Dziga Vertov Group. The sequence where a speaker on television appears with the voice of the right wing is a light parody of the system of television journalism. With Godard's signature, the camera plays with our eyes in the sequence showing a group of Trotskyite workers, seated around a table, talking about working conditions. By not showing the faces of the speakers until the last minute, after suggesting and frustrating us with the moment of revelation, we are lead to perceive ourselves as being manipulated by the choice of image and the cinematographic discourse.

The scenes that propose to reflect on various other issues, such as the maintenance of the male hierarchical process via the reproduction of the feminine as an image of seduction and the means that reproduce the image, such as cinema and television, but especially about that which one fails to hear when one is seduced by the image.

This film was produced at the behest of London Weekend Television in 1968, but was not shown in its entirety on television. Some parts of it were shown and analysed negatively on a programme called *Aquarius*, made by London Weekend Television, at the beginning of the 1970's. Legend has it that Godard himself cut his own arm in order to film the sequence with the bloody fist crawling across the snow (MacCabe, *Godard*, p. 220).

Pravda Pravda

France, 1969, 58 min, 16 mm, Colour

Secretly filmed in former Czechoslovakia in June (March, according to Lesage) of 1969.
Edited months later along with some images from Czech television

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (CM).

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger and Paul Burron) –
(WD, MoMA, IMDb)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger, Paul Burron, Jean-
Pierre Gorin) – (JL)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard (JL)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger, Paul Burron) –
(WD, MoMA, IMDb)

Cinematography

Paul Burron (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger, Paul Burron) –
(WD, MoMA)

Film editing

Christine Aya (CM. Despite the footnote which fails to explain the origin of
the credit)

Jean-Luc Godard (JL)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Henri Roger, Paul Burron) –
(WD, MoMA, IMDb)

Produced by

Claude Nejar (JL, WD, CM, MoMA, IMDb)

Cast

Jean-Pierre Gorin (Vladimir Lenin) in voice-over and the voice of a woman as Rosa
Luxemburg. Voice-over in English. MacCabe affirms that Lesage (followed by
Dixon) mistakenly attributes the voice of Lenin to Godard

Filmed secretly in former Czechoslovakia in March of 1969, soon after the spring disturbances in Prague and the Russian invasion. Various images of daily life in Czechoslovakia are accompanied by the voice-overs of Vladimir and Rosa which analyse the paradoxes of the political situation of the country and the new directions of Red Czechoslovakia. Red that would serve the film not only through its ambiguity as blood, but also as a reflection on the fading images of the world. In this sense, the opening comments are sarcastic in their dealing with the revisionism of the Czechoslovakian socialism. The image of a red rose appears in a number of circumstances, as a direct metaphor for the delicacy of the revolutionary proposals. At the end, the voices ask how one should arrive at a suitable theory according to the ideas of Mao, and they respond stating that the theory should come in tandem with social practices, with the class struggle and with production, as well as with scientific experimentation.

This film rethinks the usual manner of making documentaries, which does not generally perceive sound and image as being different materials, and it also rethinks the relationships between concept and image. *Pravda* makes a radical criticism of the documentary practice covering the proposals of Dziga Vertov, and it is therefore considered to be the “most vertovian” of the Group’s films. The film was made using Agfa products and the logo of this company is shown in conjunction with all the imagined features of western capitalism. Another metalinguistic reference is the image of the film-maker with a red camera shooting the film itself.

The film was commissioned by West German Television. In his hotel room, Paul Burron filmed and photographed images directly from Czechoslovakian television. Jean-Henri Roger did not accompany the editing of the film to the end. In this period, Jean-Pierre Gorin started a partnership with Godard that was to influence the film politically and was to become effective in *Vent d’est*. The dialogues from the film were published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n. 240, July/August 1972 as being those of Godard and Roger.

Wind from the East

Vent d'est

France, Italy, Germany, 1969-70, 100 min, 16 mm, Colour

Filed on location in Italy and at Elios Studios, where there was a far-west town as a setting, between the 16th of June and the 16th of July, 1969

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (JL, CM)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Gérard Martin) –
(WD, MOMA, IMDB)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Gianni Barcelloni,
Sergio Bazzini (JL)

Jean-Luc Godard, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Sergio Bazzini (WD, CM, MOMA, IMDB)

Cinematography

Mario Vulpiani (JL, MOMA, IMDB)

Mario Vulpiani, Mario Bagnato, Paul Burron (CM)

Sound

Antonio Ventura, Carlo Diotalevi (CM, JL, WD, MoMA)

Film editing

Christine Aya (CM)

Jean-Pierre Gorin, Enzo Micarelli (JL)

Jean-Luc Godard e Jean-Pierre Gorin (WD, MoMA, IMDB)

Cast

Gian Maria Volonté (cavalry guard); Anne Wiazemsky (woman in coat); Marie Dedieu; Glauber Rocha (as himself); José Varela; George Götz; Fabio Gariba; Jean-Luc Godard and the film crew (as themselves); Allen Midgett (Red Indian); Marco Ferreri; Paolo Pozzesi (union representative); Vanessa Redgrave (woman with movie camera); Daniel Cohn-Bendit (as himself); Franco Bucceri; Marco Vergine (thus cited by Lesage and MacCabe)

A revolutionary western that symbolically uses its characters dressed up to represent theatrically the social hierarchies. The topic was suggested by Daniel Cohn-Bendit who proposed the documentation of a miners strike as a starting point for *Vent d'Est*. The film presents a group of young people laying down in a deserted place and the voice-over discussing politics, but also female voices telling stories from the female point of view. In the midst of images showing theatrical characters, the film is interspersed with photos of Lenin and Stalin, posters with phrases that refer to concepts for discussion, images of a factory. With regard to the armed struggle, instructions are given on how to make bombs and blow up the enemy.

The film, before anything else, deals with issues regarding the ideology of cinema compositions that are automatically considered to be "natural", such as the meeting of image and sound, by way of a group of people who are supposedly about to make a film. The idea stems from that which Godard called the "bourgeois concept of representation" which in the visual arts can be related to the central perspective, but which in cinema relies on the sound to lend the tone of identification between the film and the viewer. Glauber Rocha participates in a small, yet crucial, sequence. He finds himself at cross-road, standing with his arms open and singing, when he is approached by a pregnant woman who asks: "Excuse me for interrupting your class struggle, but could you tell me the way to the political cinema?" And so Glauber shows her the way to the "dangerous, divine and wonderful cinema", the cinema of the Third World.

Gianni Barcelloni from Cineriz film producers is said to have invested US\$ 1 million in the film, paid up-front. It is also said that the film caused uproar when it was shown in Cannes in 1970, with the projection carried out in the absence of Godard. The dialogues in the film were published in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, n. 240, of July/August 1972, as having been written by Godard and Gorin. This film is the first that officialises the directorship and production of the Dziga Vertov Group and it also showed a book with a photo of the Russian film-maker. Although it makes the Group official, it restricts the duo Godard-Gorin, who came to work in ever greater proximity with each other. Allen Midgette, who played the role of a Red Indian, worked on a number of Andy Warhol films and came to be known for passing himself off as Warhol himself. A copy of the 16mm film was made in 35mm and this, according to MacBean in the article published in this catalogue, reproduces with greater intensity the greenery of rural Italy and the rosesin of the ruins. Recently a DVD of *Vent d'Est* was launched by the distributor Columbia in Japan.

Struggles in Italy

Lotte in Italia

France, Italy, 1970, 76 min, 16 mm, Colour

Practically filmed in the apartment of Godard and Wiazemsky in Paris, on Rue Saint-Jacques, in December of 1969. A smattering of parts at a factory in Italy, according to Lesage, and in Rome and Milan according to MacCabe. There is a 55-minute Italian version of the film.

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (JL, WD, MoMA, IMDB)

Dziga Vertov Group (CM)

Writing credits

Dziga Vertov Group (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (WD, MoMA, IMDB)

"Probably Jean-Pierre Gorin, primarily" (JL)

Film editing

Jean-Pierre Gorin and Jean-Luc Godard (JL)

Christine Aya (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group – Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin (IMDb)

Cinematography

Armand Marco (CM)

Sound mixing

Antoine Bonfanti (CM)

Cast

Commentaries spoken by Christina Tullio Altan (Paola Taviani), Anne Wiazemsky (shop assistant), Jérôme Hinstin (young man), Paolo Pozzessi (narrator, Italian) (JL, CM)

Produced by

Gianni Barcelloni (CM)

Instead of presenting images of militant workers or students, the film presents a character, the young woman Paola, a university student who works for Lotta Continua, a left-wing communist organization from the Italian communist party. She is presented by a voice-over at the same time as she is speaking. These voices continue in French throughout the film, but a male voice presents and comments on the section such as “university”, “militancy”, “identity”, while Paola speaks in Italian. Divided into four sections, the film repeats and re-evaluates preceding scenes in order to demonstrate different ideological facets of the militant discourse. Above all, it deals with presenting the process of the consciousness raising of a young woman who sees herself as being anti-capitalist, but who gradually begins to perceive her contradictions in a bourgeois world. Thus the film works with the dialectic proposal between concept and practice.

The writing credits for the film was based on Louis Althusser’s concept of “ideology” taken from the book *Lenin et la Philosophie* (Paris, Maspero, 1969), and its dialogues were published in the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* no. 238-239 of May/June, 1972. This has been considered to be the most theoretically coherent and political work of the Dziga Vertov Group. According to Gorin, quoted by MacCabe in an article published in this catalogue, Althusser was overwhelmed by the film while it was still in the editing room. When Godard and Gorin were in the United States giving interviews, Godard stated that he didn’t have the money to add sub-titles in English, but that he wanted to get hold of a copy in Super-8 dubbed into English. He also said that if it were not so expensive he would have made the film in video ¹. At the same time, Cacá Diegues, in an interview for *Cahiers du Cinéma* (no. 225 of november/december, 1970), said that *Lotte in Italia* was perhaps “the most dialectic of the political films” made in Europe.

[1] Goodwin, Michael, T. Luddy and N. Wise. “The Dziga Vertov Film Group in America”. *Take One. The film magazine*. March, 1970

Vladimir et Rosa

Vladimir and Rose

France, 1971, 103 min, 16 mm, Colour

Filmed in the autumn of 1970, in Paris

Directed by

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (JL, WD, MoMA, IMDb)

Dziga Vertov Group (CM)

Writing credits

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (MoMA, IMDb)

Film editing

Christine Aya and Chantal Colomer (CM)

Cinematography

Armand Marco and Gérard Martin (CM)

Dziga Vertov Group (Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin) – (MoMA)

Sound editing

Antoine Bonfanti (CM)

Cast

Jean-Luc Godard (Vladimir Lenin); Jean-Pierre Gorin (Karl Rosa and later Rosa Luxemburg); Anne Wiazemsky (Ann, women's liberation militant); Juliet Berto (Juliet, woman of the times and hippie); Ernest Menzer [Judge (Julius Hoffman, according to Dixon. Actor cited by MacCabe)]; Yves Afonso (Yves, student revolutionary from Berkeley); Larry Martin (only cited by MacCabe); Claude Nejar (Dave Dellinger, according to Dixon); voice-over in French by Jean-Pierre Gorin and Jean-Luc Godard (Cast based on Lesage. Dixon presents Godard as "Rosa")

Produced by

Claude Nejar (CM)

This film was previously titled *Sex and Revolution*. Godard played the role of Vladimir Lenin and Gorin, the role of Rosa Luxemburg. The film asks how films should be made, including the film that the viewer is watching, and announces that this film was made in order to finance another that is being made in Palestine, *Jusqu'à la victoire*. So as to reflect on political issues such as Althusser's notion of "rupture", Godard and Gorin converse using microphone, headphones and recorder, both of them stuttering on a tennis court while the game of tennis is in progress. This "stuttering" allows for a series of jokes via the repetition of syllables or words spoken with different sounds. The Group represents, in a stylised form, the trial of radical militants accused of inciting revolt at the National Convention of 1968, known as "Chicago 8", insinuating that the trial was rigged by the police themselves. The film presents the sentence given at the trial via television monitors, with characters wearing t-shirts bearing the CBS network slogan. Also on trial are the actors in the film, the names of whom are maintained so that the theatricality of the film reflects the theatrical nature of the trial. The film questions the concept of justice between theory and practice, but with a good dose of humour and irony.

It is interesting to see Godard and Gorin as characters in their films and especially in this one, which appears to be a great game, with no particular commitment to the act of filming. Gorin, dressed in a red and black cape, takes a projector from under his clothes. Godard, dressed up as a policeman, removes a truncheon from inside his trousers. Later on, dressed in colourful clothes – in this moment Godard wears a t-shirt bearing the name "Rosa", they begin to play, in the middle of a representation of a press conference, with a ball and a broomstick, interfering as two comedians in the supposed seriousness of the moment. Inspiration for this could equally have come from the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, from *comédie française* or from the Marx brothers.

Godard and Gorin made a commitment to Grove Press for the production of several films, but this was the only one that they finished. This film was co-produced by the German television company Tele-Pool.

Here and everywhere

Ici et Ailleurs

France, 1976 (1974 according to the MoMA catalogue), 50 min, 16 mm and video, Colour.

Filed in Palestine in 1969 and 1970 and in Paris during the 1970's; edited later by Godard and Miéville. This film incorporated material from the unfinished film *Jusqu'à la victoire* (or *Méthode de pensée et travail de la révolution palestinienne*), that was directed by Godard and Gorin as the Dziga Vertov Group and photographed by Armand Marco (according to MacCabe)

Directed by

Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville (CM, MoMA)

Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville and Jean-Pierre Gorin (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dziga Vertov Group, Anne-Marie Miéville (IMDb)

Editing

Anne-Marie Miéville (CM, WD, IMDb)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard, Anne-Marie Miéville and Jean-Pierre Gorin (WD)

Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville (MoMA)

Jean-Luc Godard, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Dziga Vertov Group, Anne-Marie Miéville (IMDb)

Cinematography

Armand Marco, William Lubtchansky (CM)

William Lubtchansky (WD, MoMA, IMDb)

Video

Gérard Teissède (CM)

Cast

Commentaries by Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville (CM)

Produced by

Jean-Pierre Rassam, Anne-Marie Miéville, Jean-Luc Godard (JL, CM, IMDb)

Original score

Jean Schwarz (IMDb)

In 1970, Godard and Gorin accepted the proposal of the Palestinian militant group Al Fatah to make a film about the political situation in Lebanon and Jordan. They travelled to the Middle East and filmed images such as the Palestinian training camps, guerrilla warfare locations, men and women shooting, adults and children exercising. After a certain time, with their money coming to an end, the two of them had to return home and accept the proposals of the German television company and Grove Films in order to raise more money so that they could finish the film. It was this fact that inspired the reference, at the beginning of *Vladimir et Rosa*, to the purpose of that film being made only so that they could finish the other. Highly appropriately, this film was to be called *Jusqu'à la victoire* ("Until victory"), but it went no further. This was also when the Dziga Vertov Group came to an end. Following the massacre in Aman, known as "Black September", Godard had difficulty finishing the film, in fact he affirmed that almost all of the actors had been killed.

Later on, Godard and Miéville re-edited this material, together with some new material discussing precisely the proposals of the Dziga Vertov Group. The new film alleges that the "sound" of the guerrilla warfare, of the inflamed political speeches, overwhelmed the images. This film saw the start of the process of the extensive use of video in the work of Godard, which uses newspaper photos, familiar television images and images of the holocaust. It is a reflection on the part of Godard regarding the proposals of the Dziga Vertov Group, through the images captured in Jordan. Throughout the film, these reflections extend to the places from which the film is shot, from where it is projected and from where it is seen here, in French family television, and there, in the Palestinian revolution. For Godard, the place of cinema (more precisely, of the image) is in the *et* (and) that connects *ici* (here) to *ailleurs* (there).

On the first day that the film was shown, in Paris in September 1976, a bomb was found in the Quintette screen room and the film was no longer shown there, being kept only in one other screen room. The situation at the time that *Jusqu'à la victoire* was edited was so complicated that Godard went as far as asking the producer to provide special protection at the door of the editing room, the place where he lived at the time. Julia Lesage, in her guide to the works of Godard, reproduces the majority of the dialogues from *Ici et Ailleurs*.

All's well Tout va bien

France, 1972, 95 min, 35 mm, Colour

Filmed at the Epinay studio between the 1st and 23rd of February 1972 and around Paris in the periods from the 17th to the 31st of January 1972 and the 24th to the 06th of March 1972. Monologues based on *Vive la société de consommation* by Jean Saint-Goeurs, in the magazine *CGT*, on the official monologue of the union *La vie ouvrière*, on the magazine *Maoist* and on the monologue of the left-wing worker *La cause du peuple*.

Directed by

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, JL, WD, MoMA, IMDb, DVD)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, JL, WD, MoMA, IMDb, DVD)

Film editing

Kenout Peltier, Claudine Merlin (CM, JL, DVD)
Kenout Peltier (MoMA, WD)

Cinematography

Armand Marco, Yves Agostini, Edouard Burgess (CM)
Armand Marco (WD, JL, MoMA, DVD)

Cameramen

Yves Agostini, Édouard Burgess (DVD)

Assistant Directors

Isabelle Pons, Jean-Hughes Nelkene (CM)

Art Directors

Jacques Dugied, Olivier Girard, Jean-Luc Dugied (JL)
Jacques Dugied (DVD, as set designer)

Special effects

Jean-Claude Dolbert, Paul Trielli, Roger Jumeau, Marcel Vantieghem (JL)

Jean-Claude Dolbert, Paul Trielle (DVD)

Sound

Bernard Orthion, Gilles Orthion (CM, JL)

Bernard Ortion, Armand Bonfati (MoMA, DVD)

Score

Eric Charden, Thomas Rivat, Paul Beuscher (CM, MoMA)

Song

Il y a du soleil sur la France

Sound mixing

Antoine Bonfanti (CM, JL)

Stills

Alain Miéville e Anne-Marie Michel (Miéville) – (JL, DVD)

Produced by

Allain Coffier (JL, DVD called “administration”)

Alain Coiffier, J.P.Rassam, Jean-Luc Godard (WD)

Executive production

Jean-Pierre Rassam (JL, CM, DVD called “representative production”)

Cast

Yves Montand (Jacques or himself, according to Lesage); Jane Fonda (Suzanne), Vittorio Caprioli (factory boss); Jean Pignol (CGT attendant); Pierre Oudry (Frédéric); Elisabeth Chauvin (Geneviève); Anne Wiazemsky (left-wing woman); Marcel Gassouk (second CGT attendant); Didier Gaudron (Germain); Michel Marot (Communist Party representative); Huguette Miéville (Georgette); Luce Marnaux (Armande); Natalie Simon (Jeanne); Eric Chartier (Lucien); Bugette (George); Castel Casti (Jacques); Jean-René Defleurieu (left-wing man); Louise Rioton (Lyse); Ibrahim Seck

This film tells the story of an intellectual couple working in the media. Suzanne (Jane Fonda) is an American journalist who works for a radio station and Jacques (Yves Montand) is a director of *New Wave* films who became a political radical in 1968, but who relaxed his views and now makes advertising films. They both go to the Salumi meat packing plant, which is on strike, and end up being held as prisoners by the workers in the same room as the company director.

In open scenery, where it is possible to see several compartments of the building and which allows a view of the individual stories without favouring any single point of view, the workers are shown at the same time as the company boss and the couple. Right at the beginning, this boss monologues about the current political situation,, arguing that the Marxist struggles no longer make sense and that the unions do not protect the workers. One funny scene, in the name of vengeance for the downtrodden classes, is when the boss tries to use the bathroom but finds it occupied, so he tries the filthy bathroom on the floor below, but there he is obliged to follow the rule for the workers that they can only be in there for three minutes. He runs desperately back up to his office, breaks the window and urinates outside. As the inspiration for the film came from Bertolt Brecht, scenes with a certain humorous tone are part of the plot. Little by little, the individual concerns begin to prove more important than the struggle in favour of the downtrodden workers, and the film ends with a conclusion about the individual story that goes on to make up the greater story. Reflection is directed toward consciousness of the alienation of the individual, in as much as that the characters recapitulate the feelings of May '68 in relation to the new political and consumer oriented times. The film never fails to refer back to itself and at the beginning it shows a close-up of a hand signing cheques, demonstrating the expenditures on the production of the film in question. At the end, a final title card states: "this is an account for those who have none."

The film, was partially financed by Gaumont, who paid the fees of Jane Fonda and Yves Montand. Paramount was also interested in *the film* [which cost, according to Lesage, US\$1,200,000]. Montand appears to have always wanted to work with Godard, but Jane Fonda, at the time recently separated from Roger Vadim, did not initially accept the proposal (she didn't want to work with two men), but afterwards was convinced by Gorin. In the end, the film was a commercial and critical failure, according to MacCabe. In relation to the critics of the time, it is interesting to note Pierre Baudry's article, *La critique et 'Tout va bien'*, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, no. 240 of July/August 1972. He analyses the critical reception not only of the film but also of the left-wing idea of collective labour and of the Godard-Gorin duo. A DVD from the Criterion Collection was launched in the United States in 2004 with the films *Tout va bien* and *Letter to Jane*, as well as a small catalogue with articles about them.

Letter to Jane (An investigation about a still)

USA, 1972, 52 min, 16 mm, Colour

Filed in Frankfurt on the 6th of November 1974 and on the Avenue du Maine in Paris.

Directed by

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, WD, DVD, MoMA, IMDb)
Jean-Luc Godard (JL)

Writing credits

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, WD, DVD, MoMA, IMDb)
Jean-Luc Godard (JL)

Cast

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin make commentaries in voice-over analysing the photograph of John Kraft that appeared in *L'Express* magazine (July, 31 – August, 6 of 1972) showing Jane Fonda in her trip to North Vietnam

Produced by

Jean-Luc Godard and Jean-Pierre Gorin (CM, MoMA)

Godard and Gorin deconstruct the photograph of John Kraft that appeared in *L'Express* magazine in July/August of 1972, showing Jane Fonda in her trip to North Vietnam. At the time, Jane Fonda had come to be known as Hanoi Jane and had gone to Vietnam with pacifistic aims in mind. The film was taken to New York for presentation along with *Tout va bien*. According to MacBean (*Film and Revolution*, p.167), on this occasion Godard and Gorin stated that the film was made in a few weeks, with a budget of US\$ 300, in the aim of discussing *Tout va bien*.

Analysis is based on the contradiction between the wording of the magazine, "Jane Fonda questions the citizens of Hanoi about American bombings", and the photo showing Fonda listening, rather than asking questions, to an anonymous Vietnamese person, whose back is to the camera. The actress is in focus, while a Vietnamese citizen in the background is out of focus; the angle of the camera, positioned below the subjects, makes them look larger than they are. For this pair, none of this is accidental, but is rather an imperialistic way of being pacifist. Fonda's face, wearing a tragic expression in the photo, is compared with various other moments in the life of the actress, in various other films, including *Tout va bien*, and also of her father Henry Fonda, demonstrating the similarity of their facial expressions in moments of completely different emotions. The film makes a minimalist reflection on the status of image and the role of the intellectual and sarcastically criticizes the Hollywood iconography and star system. It is about representation in the contemporary media. The very fact that the photo was published by *L'Express* is, for the directors, a symptom demonstrating that the revolution is only dealt with in a simplified way, with no contradictions and with not even a minimal presentation of the dialect of the powers that be. In a way, looking at it today, the film comes across as a warning about what the system is doing to the revolutionary movements, simplifying and ingesting the ideas in the name of the system itself.

This film was considered to be a lesson in the reading of images by Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography*, but was also considered to be a rape by two men, one at a time, of a woman, as told by Gorin in relation to the comments made by the Yugoslavian director Makavejev after seeing the film (MacBean, *Film and revolution*, p. 176).

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