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HIST 329

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Film Response No. 1 Battleship Potemkin | 1925

Considering the date, Battleship Potjemkin resembles the standard of living and disparity between classes during the end of the Russian Empire. Conflict ensues from the poor standard of living, from the sleeping quarters, larvae infested food, and low-quality meals of tea, bread and borscht. The officers come across with the same opinions where the enlisted sailors rebel with split opinions.

It's important to notice how the officer class and the enlisted sailors interact, or the lack of interaction. The enlisted sailors act as a collective; they have a collective voice and are subject to the lesser standard of living than the officers. Whereas this is normal modern Navies around the world still have a similar hierarchy. Of the sailors with dissenting opinions were threatened with death, as supported--exhibited in Botchkareva's memoir, a utilitarian method to keep control while shooting devalued life. Ironically, the initiative seems to come from the thoughts of a sailor after reading a quote printed on the plate that implies that all men should be treated in the same conditions.

Because this was deemed unethical, uprising formed from the collectivist Russian sailors. The value of life was deemed more important as a whole than the lives determined valuable by the officer class. The religious character who gives a blessing to the men to be executed has apparently hypocritical to the rights of men. Parallel to the events of the Russian revolution in the main cities of Petrograd and Moscow, the revolution following death of a sailor is symbolized as

“one death for all”(40:10). Whereas this seems to fit the utilitarian philosophy, the sailors mourn this loss as unnecessary, for any man. The land of Russia (Or Odessa, Ukraine, off of the Black Sea, is a renowned location for romanticized Russian territory), sailors dispersed into a “white winged Flock” (43:00) combined with a gentle score. The white wings symbolized peace after the overturn of power and cease of oppressive disparity. Later in the century as nuclear power becomes weaponized, the white wings and dove-like symbolism is used to voice dissented opinions.

Suddenly, a counter uprising begins from the upper-oppressing Cossacks to counter the red-flagged support by the people. They determined that support for the sailors was worth the same penalty as their insurgence: death. As I’m able to mouth out some of the words, it seems that one of the civilian supporters shouted out “Druzjei,” a cry of “friends” inferring that everyone in the scene are a collective Russian people despite the violent travesty -- no one deserves death. Women, children and invalids are slaughtered without mercy, showing the ruthless brutality of the onslaught.

Finally, the sailors retaliate to the Tsar’s/ Cossacks slaughter. Sailors fire cannons from Potjemkin and crush the lion statues and any presence of oppression. Essentially, any heart that doesn’t beat as one with the Russian people. The sailors are united as one, an ideal presented by the Bolshevik party—moving gears and the rhythmic score presents an idea of industrialization and cooperative utility across the troops, moving their “hearts forward” (1:05:40).