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“Scenes in the Soviet Russia. Summer of 1930”: Frank Fetter`s Film about His Soviet Trip in 1930

## Abstract

The article presents results of studying the amateur film “Scenes in the Soviet Russia. Summer of 1930” by the American economist Frank Whitson Fetter (1899–1991) filmed in the Soviet Union in the summer of 1930. Firstly, it reviews historiography of amateur cinema and notes methods used in the research on Fetter's film. The section “Context of creation” reconstructs conditions of filming the movie in the USSR and circumstances of its currency. Fetter came to the country with intention of becoming expert in Soviet economics. He came well prepared: he had a Leica camera, a 16 mm Bell & Howell movie camera, and large supply of films. Fetter spent six days in Moscow and six weeks in Kazan, voyaged on the Volga and the Caspian Sea, visited the Caucasus, and then returned to Moscow for three days and went back to the United States. During his trip, he took about 300 photographs and made a 40-minute movie. While photographs have already been introduced into scientific use, the film remains unknown to scholars and wide audience. The section “Movie content and aesthetics” considers plot and film techniques and elements. The movie consists of three parts: his stay in Moscow, his visit to the Autonomous Tatar Republic (ATSSR), cruise on the Volga and the Caspian Sea. The starting point for the analysis was Pierre Bourdieu's research on amateur photography. According to his conclusions, each group of people chooses a certain range of objects, genres, and compositions for shooting, and thus, the image is socially constructed. Fetter's cinematic area was determined by his research interests and experience. His draft notes confirm that his focus during filming was on the economic sphere. The movie aesthetics direct the viewer's eye to these plots. While observing everyday life, Fetter captured urban and rural transport infrastructure, trade relations, purchase and sale process and range of goods, queues. When visiting the countryside, Fetter observed the harvest and filmed various stages of the process. The film focuses on production and material base of individual and collective farms, organization and conditions of peasants work, residential and farm buildings, details of everyday life. The Volga-Caspian voyage permitted to capture the state of water transport, conditions of passenger and goods transportation. He devoted particular attention to filming propaganda materials. Thus, the film represents his professional interests and highlights socio-economic situation during the New Economic Policy dismantlement and transition to forced industrialization and collectivization.

## Keywords

Historical cinematographic sources, Frank Whitson Fetter, amateur cinema, documentary films, foreigners in the USSR, film studies, Soviet economy.

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