

**Saving Bruce Lee
African and Arab Cinema
in the Era of Soviet Cultural
Diplomacy**

FILM-makers and spectators. What are these friends or enemies? Friends, surely—you will say. Why then are spectators sometimes indifferent to those films which send a wave of delightful excitement through the ranks of professionals? Why do spectators sometimes break their way through to real cinema art? ...

One speaker after another ascended the platform which he referred to as the Festival of Art. The discussion of the festival, with frequent reference being made to the cinema—Eisenstein, Chaplin, Griffith, and the Yugoslav filmmaker, these few phrases which were reverently uttered and heard.

Film-makers made for people, for millions of spectators—this, in the language of the talk, which are continuing today.

(From top to bottom): Anwar-ul-Karim, Dr. S. Kanagan-Krishna, how serious the problem is for his country. The author of a many-volume history of cinematography, George S. Shubert, has also written about cinema. Dmitry Piatrovsky, editor-in-chief of the magazine "Soviet Ekran". Serious people will get something during serious debate.

From directors Mikhail Romm, Friedrich Ermler and Lev Aronson have also come for the discussion. More frequently, however, they have to write their disputes in film studio positions.

Giuseppe De Santis.

**FOR HUMANISM IN CINEMA ART, FOR
PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG NATIONS!**

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Paul Awa (Cameroon), a student at the all-Union Institute of Cinematography (foreground) is trying hard to remember everything that people are saying here.

Saving Bruce Lee - African and Arab Cinema in the Era of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy
— African and Arab Cinema in the Era of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy
by Rasha Salti, Gabrielle Chomentowski

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In the context of the Cold War bipolarity, the African continent and the Arab world were contested territories for the strategic deployment of influence between the superpowers. Cultural diplomacy represented an important realm in which that contest was manifested, specifically with the creation of specialized professional national elites whose allegiance would be organically bound to either power. Under the aegis of the International Socialist Friendships, the Soviet Union used channels of diplomacy to host a remarkable number of students at universities in Moscow and other cities in the Soviet bloc. This publication focuses on the famous Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography (VGIK) in Moscow from which filmmakers Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauritania/Mali), Ossama Mohammed (Syria), Suliman Mohamed Ibrahim Elnour (Sudan) and Costa Diagne (Guinea) graduated. It retraces in official archives (translated to English), how their passage at the VGIK was recorded, and the film festivals that invited them to interact with other filmmakers, critics and stars. The publication also includes three essays by Constantin Katsakioris, Gabrielle Chomentowski and Elena Razlogova, prominent scholars of Soviet film and cultural history.

Im Kontext des Kalten Krieges waren der afrikanische Kontinent und die arabische Welt hart umkämpfter Spielball der Supermächte. Im strategischen Wettbewerb um Einfluss und Bündnispartner spielte auch die Kulturdiplomatie eine wichtige Rolle: Die weltpolitische Rivalität zeigte sich nicht zuletzt im Versuch, nationale Eliten auszubilden, die der jeweiligen Macht verbunden bleiben sollten. So nutzte die Sowjetunion unter dem Titel der sozialistischen Völkerfreundschaft die Kanäle ihrer Kulturdiplomatie, um eine große Zahl von Studentinnen und Studenten an Universitäten in Moskau und anderen Städten des Ostblocks auszubilden. Saving Bruce Lee ist wirft einen Blick auf das Gerassimow-Institut für Kinematographie (WGIK) in Moskau, an dem die Filmemacher Abderrahmane Sissako (Mauretanien/Mali), Ossama Mohammed (Syrien), Suliman Mohamed Ibrahim Elnour (Sudan) und Costa Diagne (Guinea) ihren Abschluss machten. Anhand ihrer Spuren in offiziellen Archiven (übersetzt ins Deutsche) zeichnet sie ihren Werdegang an der WGIK nach und

öffnet einen Blick auf die Film Festivals, zu denen sie eingeladen wurden, um mit anderen Filmmachern, Kritikern und Stars zusammenzutreffen. Zudem enthält der Band Essays von Constantin Katsakioris, Gabrielle Chomentowski und Elena Raslogowa, Spezialist*innen auf dem Gebiet sowjetischer Film- und Kulturgeschichte.

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