

## **DEMONTAGE: THE ROLE OF DOCUMENTARY CINEMA IN THE FALL OF THE USSR**

(Dedicated to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its dissolution)

### Description and Preliminary Program

During the 1980s, film became an important medium in the development of critical thought in the Soviet Union, a movement that supported (and was supported by) Gorbachev's glasnost', and with time took over the initiative. A critical attitude revealed itself as the strongest in film, where dedication was most determined to use aesthetics means in a variety of artistic research investigating the USSR's historical, social, and ethnic conflicts, which by that time were already tearing the empire apart.

In 1984, the new openness was signalled when Tengiz Abuladze's *Repentance*, a strongly anti-Stalinist film, was recommended by Gorbachev to be shown at an all-Union screening campaign all over the country. In 1986, Juris Podnieks documentary *Is It Easy to Be Young?* broke all box-office records revealing the existence of a disturbingly contradictory and conflictual youth culture. With further weakening of censorship throughout the late 1980s, more films and documentaries came to contribute to an explosion of critical public discussion. In its attempt to use film in order to upgrade its legitimacy, power lost to the society's will to openness and reform. In this process, documentaries played a special role, both aesthetically and ideologically.

This project is performed in collaboration with the Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents (Krasnogorsk), the State Film Museum (Moscow) and its director, film historian and theorist Naum Kleiman, and the Juris Podnieks film studio (Riga). Previously, the Krasnogorsk archive and the Moscow Film Museum worked with us in preparation of a film program for the VIII ICCEES World congress in Stockholm in 2010, under the title *USSR as a Filmic Assemblage* with Soviet documentaries from the 1920s-40s. As a continuation of this discussion about how the USSR was created in documentary film, *Demontage* seeks to explore how and why it collapsed. We are preparing a program of a dozen films and a roundtable discussion with film scholars, artists, and theorists. In the selection of films for screening, emphasis was made on regional film studios (Riga, Vilnius, Leningrad/St. Petersburg, Irkutsk, Alma-Ata/Almaty), all of them outstanding centres of documentary filmmaking. The film program is represented by work of internationally renowned filmmakers (Šarūnas Bartas, Gerz Frank, Vladimir Eisner, Safarbek Saliev, Juris Podnieks, Bako Sadykov, Aleksandr Sokurov; and, as a comparative context, *D'Est* by Chantal Ackerman).

## Preliminary Program

**December 7<sup>th</sup>**, 2010, 16.00–18.00

Naum Kleiman (Film Museum, Moscow)

*"Ljubov' poeta"* – *Sergei Eisenstein's Pushkin Project* (NB! **In Russian**)

Stockholm University E379

**December 9<sup>th</sup>**, Friday, 2010, 11.00 – 18.00

Södertörns högskola, Room UB 524

- 11.00 Welcome and Introduction  
11.30 – 13.00 Juris Podnieks (Riga), *Is It Easy to Be Young?* (1986)  
13.00-13.30 coffee  
13.30-15.00 Aleksandr Sokurov (St.Petersburg), *Maria* (1978-88) and  
*Last Day of a Rainy Summer* (1978)  
15.00 – 15.30 coffee  
15.20 – 18.00 **ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION**  
Naum Kleiman (Film Museum, Moscow), Elena Kolikova and  
Natalya Kalantarova (Russian State Archive of Film and Photo  
Documents, Krasnogorsk), Natascha Drubek-Meyer  
(Regensburg University and Famu, Prague), Antra Cilinska  
(Juris Podnieks Studio, Riga), Maria Zennström (author and  
filmmaker, Art Academy Stockholm), Lars Kleberg (scholar  
and translator, Russian and Polish literature and film), Irina  
Sandomirskaja (Cultural Studies, Södertörns högskola)

**December 10<sup>th</sup>**, Saturday, 2010, 12.00-18.00

- 12.00 –13.45 Juris Podnieks, *Soviets* (parts 1-3) (1989)  
Sarunas Bartas (Vilnius), *In Memory of a Day Gone By* (1990)  
13.45 – 14.30 Lunch  
14.30 – 16.15 Gerts Frank and Vladimir Eisner (Riga and Irkutsk),  
*There Were Seven Simeons* (1989)  
16.15 – 16.30 Coffee  
16.30 – 17.30 Bako Sadykov (Alma-Ata), *Adonis XIV* (1985);  
Safarbak Saliev, *Zhakon—A Glimpse into Oneself* (1986)  
17.30 – 18.00 Final discussion