

## FROM THE FACTORY TO THE FLAT: Thirty Years of the *Song of the Counterplan*<sup>1</sup>

**John Riley**

British Universities Film & Video Council

The song is one of those that will long continue to keep green the memory of that amazing heroic epoch.<sup>2</sup>

Shostakovich worked in virtually every genre. But some genres are more equal than others and his film scores and songs have not had the exposure or level of analysis that some of his other works have enjoyed. So a song that appears in a film may appear to be doubly blighted. But despite being one of his least studied works *Pesnia o vstrechnom* (*Song of the Counterplan*) is one of his most intriguing compositions, perhaps his most popular work and almost certainly his most frequently heard. And just as he re-used it at several points through his career, so we can use it to track political changes and his responses to them. As well as featuring in the film *Vstrechnyi* (*The Counterplan*, 1932)<sup>3</sup> Shostakovich reused the song in three places: the cantata *Poema o rodine* (*The Poem of the Motherland*, 1947); the film score *Michurin* (1949) and the operetta *Moskva Cheremushki* (*Moscow Cheremushki*, 1959), filmed in 1962 with the name of the city dropped from the title. There were also various other uses of it, both at home and abroad, and they will also be briefly discussed even though they are more tangential.

---

<sup>1</sup> First published: John Riley, *From the Factory to the Flat: Thirty Years of the Song of the Counterplan*, in: *Soviet Music and Society under Lenin and Stalin: the Baton and Sickle*, ed. Neil Edmunds, RoutledgeCurzon 2004, pp. 67-80. Reprinted with permission.

<sup>2</sup> I. Shilova, *The Story of a Song*, „Soviet Film”, 3 March 1971, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, film dates refer to the year of release rather than production.

By 1931 Shostakovich had already written three film scores: *Novyi Vavilon* (*New Babylon*, 1929), *Odna* (*Alone*, 1931) and *Zlatye gory* (*The Golden Mountains*, 1931). With each he had taken forward lessons for his work both in and out of the cinema. For Kozintsev and Trauberg's *New Babylon* he composed seven large movements to be performed live to the film's seven single-reel 'acts'.<sup>4</sup> Avant-garde, politically contentious and poorly performed it was hugely unpopular with both musicians and audiences and was only shown in cinemas for a few days. But whatever political lessons he learned, there was a musical one as well. *New Babylon* was re-edited after Shostakovich had completed the score, considerably shortening it, but the large blocks of music were unwieldy and re-editing them to match the new version of the film proved difficult, contributing to its failure.

Despite this, the directors kept faith, inviting Shostakovich to score their next film, *Alone*. Here he had the advantage of a synchronised soundtrack so that at least the music could not go awry in performance. He had also realised that on its way to completion, film is a fluid medium and that his music needed structural flexibility. Hence, he composed a mosaic of small fragments that could be shuffled, cut and repeated as necessary.<sup>5</sup>

But there was another difference between the two types of score. In *New Babylon* Shostakovich used popular pieces, such as *The Marseillaise*, and melodies by Offenbach like Wagnerian leitmotifs. For the next films he did this through original songs. *Kakaya khoroshaya budet zhizn'!* (*How Good Life Will Be!*) recurs at crucial points in *Alone*<sup>6</sup> and *Kogda b imel zlatye gory* (*If Only I Had Golden Mountains*) is a kind of leitmotif for the dreams of the proletariat in *The Golden Mountains*. However, he really struck gold with the song for his next film, *The Counterplan* (1932).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> The number of acts has been questioned. James Judd's complete recording (Capriccio 10 341/2) is divided into eight parts but in Rozhdestvensky's suite the finale is part seven. The directors wrote of seven reels. G. Kozintsev, L. Trauberg, *Novyi Vavilon*, „Sovetskii ekran”, 31 December 1928, pp. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> He used the technique in several films, but it means that the published scores usually do not reflect what is actually heard on the soundtrack.

<sup>6</sup> Trauberg later claimed that it was his melody and Shostakovich had merely transcribed it. 'I wrote the song and instructed Shostakovich how to compose it, and he wrote it right away, a very good song.' T. van Houten, *Leonid Trauberg and his Films: Always the Unexpected*, s'Hertogenbosch: Art & Research 1989, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup> *The Encounter* is the most accurate of a bewildering array of English titles, including *Pozor* (*Shame*) the title under which it was reviewed in „The New York Times”, *Coming*

The only film specifically commissioned to celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the revolution, *The Counterplan* was so important that Leningrad Party chief Sergei Kirov gave advice from early on.<sup>8</sup> But it was also part of a mini-genre that had recently emerged called the 'industrialisation film' that included *Entuziazm aka Simfoniia Donbassa* (*Enthusiasm aka The Symphony of the Donbass*, 1931), *Liudi i dela* (*Men and Jobs*, 1932) and *Ivan* (1932). Appropriately for a revolutionary commission *The Counterplan* successfully opened on 7 November 1932 despite heavy criticism leading to it being re-edited at the last minute. It was directed by Sergei Iutkevich, Shostakovich's friend and former lodger, and Fridrikh Ermler, father of the conductor Mark. They divided the work between them, with the 27-year old Iutkevich directing the younger characters and the six-year older Ermler the senior cast members. Perhaps Ermler was also expected to draw on his experience in the Cheka (the forerunner of the KGB) to keep an eye on things, though he later claimed to have had no particular enthusiasm for the subject.<sup>9</sup> Both directors are complex figures. Iutkevich was denounced as a leftist in the 1930s, and a cosmopolitan in the 1940s and had *Rassvet nad Rossiia* (*Light Over Russia*, 1947) banned, but also produced a series of iconic biographies of Lenin. He restored Eisenstein's banned *Bezhin lug* (*Bezhin Meadow*, 1935–7, unfinished) and oversaw the publication of his writings but re-edited Sergo Paradzhanov's films to make them acceptable for release. Ermler made the two-part *Velikii grazhdanin* (*The Great Citizen*, 1937 and 1939),<sup>10</sup> a fictionalised 'explanation' of the assassination of Kirov and the necessity for retribution and, coincidentally in this context, *Bolshaia sila* (*The Great Force*, 1950) which deals with the campaign to end 'obedience to foreign science' echoing the Lysenkoist hijacking of agronomic theory which is behind *Michurin*. But his films are well made and he attempted

---

*Your Way, The Passer-by, The First Comer and Turbine 50,000*. The commonest title, *The Counterplan*, refers to the contemporary slogan 'Let's have a counterplan to the industrial and financial plan' as factories 'autonomously decided' to exceed their production quotas by a set amount. The working title was *Greeting the Future*.

<sup>8</sup> Curiously, it is little mentioned in the book *Quinze ans de cinématographie soviétique*, Moscow: Direction Général de l'Industrie Cinématographique près du Conseil des Commissaires du Peuple de l'URSS 1935.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in P. Kenz, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*, London: I.B. Tauris 2001, p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> Shostakovich wrote the score for both parts.

to produce rounded characters, escaping the clichéd one-dimensional portrayals that some directors provided. Though for some critics *The Counterplan* was not successful in this regard, others were favourably disposed towards it.<sup>11</sup>

*The Counterplan* is a troubling but also an ambiguous film. The wrecker Skvortsov endangers the work of a Leningrad factory but his sabotage is discovered and corrected by good communists. But can it be entirely serious when Party Secretary Vasia enthusiastically declares: 'Numbers! If numbers are against the fulfilment of the plan then they are hostile numbers! And the people who bring them forward are not our people but enemies!' But there is also a love interest as he struggles with his growing love for Katia, the wife of his friend Pavel. In a beautifully filmed White Nights sequence, Vasia and Katia walk through a Leningrad undergoing redevelopment; she is explaining her unhappiness and he concealing his feelings. This was criticised as a distraction, but apart from being an attractive romantic subplot it touches on recent re-evaluations of social structures including love and the relationship between men and women, even though it has a conventional outcome.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless at a time of show-trials and the 'unmasking of wreckers' *The Counterplan* is supportive of the regime's tactics though the makers had less than total choice in the matter.

Shostakovich got the job of composing the music to *The Counterplan* through Iutkevich and co-writer Lev Arnshtam, a fellow piano student and sound engineer on *Alone* and *The Golden Mountains*.<sup>13</sup> Shostakovich worked hard on the film's most famous song, drafting several versions but finally producing one

---

<sup>11</sup> At the first Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Ilia Ehrenburg criticised the characterisation: 'Mannequins are mannequins'. But the head of the film industry claimed that Babchenko (an old-style worker who undergoes a *perestroika* to become a valued worker) was one of 'that series of positive heroes produced by the greatest masters of Soviet cinema'. B. Shumiatskii, *Kinematografiia millionov*, Moscow 1935. Translated in: *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents 1896-1939*, eds. R. Taylor, I. Christie, Cambridge: MA. Harvard University Press 1988, p. 359.

<sup>12</sup> Maiakovskii's *ménage-à-trois* with Osip and Lily Brik was only the most famous revision of domestic arrangements influencing Abram Room's film *Tretia meshchanskaia* (*Bed and Sofa*) (1927) for which the set designer was Iutkevich. For an analysis of this trend and its antecedents, see J. Graffy, *Bed and Sofa*, London: I.B. Tauris 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Arnshtam went on to direct and Shostakovich scored five of his films: *Podrugi* (*Girlfriends*, 1935), *Druzia* (*Friends*, 1938), *Zoia* (1944), *Pyat' dni pyat' nochi* (*Five Days Five Nights*, 1961) and *Sofia Perovskaia* (1968). He also wrote a march for Arnshtam's unmade film *Podzhigateli voiny* (*The Warmonger*, c. 1948).

that became and would remain immensely popular.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps it was envy of this that led to charges of plagiarism.<sup>15</sup> However, this is not the place to comment on the similarity of the melody of Khrennikov's song *Proshchal'naia* (*Parting*) in the 1944 film *V shest' chasov posle voiny* (*At Six o'Clock PM After the War*).

However, just a fortnight after the film had opened, an article appeared under Shostakovich's name condemning the state of Soviet music and blaming clichéd incidental music and the poor quality of sound recording for films. More outspokenly the article said that 'we must do away with the depersonalisation of the composer'<sup>16</sup>. Hand in hand with the industrialisation which *The Counterplan* celebrated had gone an increasing downgrading of the importance of the individual. Society was described in terms of a machine with its individual members as cogs, and *Alone* included several declarations that individual desires were to be overridden by the needs of society. Several years later Shostakovich laconically announced that 'Finally the melody's author becomes anonymous, something of which he can be proud'.<sup>17</sup> On a more practical note he added that 'The *Song of the Counterplan* has taught me that music composed as an integral part of a film must not lose its artistic value, even outside it.'<sup>18</sup> This was a lesson he would very much take to heart with the song, exploiting its artistic value to the full in several contexts.

Given the subject matter and the conditions under which it was made, Shostakovich must have had mixed feelings about the project and his contribution to it. These may have been intensified when, after a 1933 cinema conference, it was held up as 'the leading model for entertainment films', and again in 1938 when the song's lyricist Boris Kornilov was purged.<sup>19</sup> The lyrics

<sup>14</sup> There are three sketches – two for voice alone (13 bars each) and one with piano (14 bars) – in: D. Shostakovich, *Collected Works*, vol. 42, Moscow 1987, p. 476. For the reuse of the song *Michurin*, see pp. 477-482.

<sup>15</sup> S. Khentova, *V mire Shostakovicha*, Moscow 1996, pp. 125-126 and 141.

<sup>16</sup> D. Shostakovich, *Deklaratsiia obiazannostey kompozitora*, „Rabochy i teatr”, 31 November 1931, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> D. Shostakovich, *Kino kak shkola kompozitora*, in: *30 let sovetskoi kinomatografii*, ed. D. Eremin, Moscow 1950, p. 355.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> Quotation from M. Turovskaya, *The 1930s and 1940s: Cinema in Context*, in: *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, eds. R. Taylor, D. Spring, London: Routledge 1993, p. 44. As well as disappearing from histories, many of Kornilov's papers were destroyed. *The Song of the Counterplan* continued to be popular, but for many years was described as a setting of an anonymous folk text.

are a simple call for workers to 'meet the cool of the morning' and go joyfully to work but it was undoubtedly the tune - a brisk march - that caught people's imagination. Shostakovich had a knack of writing these catchy melodies and none is more so than this one. Having worked hard on the song Shostakovich made the song work hard for him and much of the film's score is based on variants of it, interleaving it with other pieces in the same way he had approached *The Golden Mountains*. Amongst the variations are choral, solo vocal, and orchestral versions as well as one accompanied by guitar in the manner of a melancholy Russian romance. Despite the crudity of the recording, which must have pained Shostakovich, all three of his first sound films have adventurous soundscapes that pointedly mingle speech, music and sound effects, and it did not go unnoticed.<sup>20</sup> There are even moments in *The Counterplan* where it is not clear where the music stops and the sound effects start as the factory sounds merge into or echo the score.<sup>21</sup>

Its popularity of the *Song of the Counterplan* must have started as an almost exclusively urban phenomenon as less than 1 per cent of projectors were equipped with sound so most cinema-goers outside the major cities would not have heard it<sup>22</sup>. But it may have been helped along by radio broadcasts and the publication of the sheet music in 1933. The film was also distributed overseas though not everyone fell entirely under its spell. According to one British reviewer the film's one big fault was 'its inordinate length and an occasional slowness of development indicating a certain carelessness in the construction of the scenario' but that this had been recognised and it was to be re-edited for its British release. But, though the final reel 'provides one of the finest in-

---

<sup>20</sup> *The New York Times* reviewer described *The Counterplan's* sound reproduction as 'excellent', but there is no doubt that the Soviets were already slipping behind in this technology. H T S., *Soviet Machine Romance*, „The New York Times”, 11 March 1933.

<sup>21</sup> Kurt London comments on the film's use of 'noise-apparatus' and how 'the use of electrical instruments and special sound-effects interwoven with the music presents quite new sensations to the ear.' The Soviet Union was 'about to solve the problem of film music, both serious and light, in a form that will correspond in quality to its pictures.' K. London, *Film Music: A Summary of the Characteristic Features of its History, Aesthetics, Technique; and Possible Developments*, London: Faber and Faber 1936, pp. 178 and 244-245.

<sup>22</sup> Figure from E. Kuznetsova, *Vokrug templana*, „Kino”, No. 5, 1933, p. 1. Kuznetsova also claims that in 1933 there were only 200 sound projectors in the entire country compared to 32,000 silent ones.

stances of the dramatic use of sound that we have seen', neither Shostakovich nor the music are mentioned.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, as so often with his incidental music, Shostakovich almost immediately raided it for other works though curiously he left the song alone, using another piece in his unfinished operetta *Bol'shaia molniia* (*The Great Lightning*, 1932).

But if Shostakovich was steering clear of the song, others were not, and it turned up in 1936 in Jean Renoir's *La vie est à nous*, under the title *Song of the Komsomols*. This propaganda film for the French Front Populaire combines fiction and documentary footage, including speeches by Maurice Thorez and Marcel Cachin. Hitler's image is accompanied by the barking of a dog, and images of Mussolini alternate with battle scenes and corpses. In contrast the Soviet regime is shown in a positive light. The song was also taken up by at least part of the left wing in Britain as Nancy Head gave it a new lyric and it was published at the beginning of the war by the Workers' Music Association under the title *Salute to Life*.

These 'left' associations may have been problematic in the pre-war West but when East and West joined in fighting Nazism the song's communist overtones were overlooked in the excitement of the pact. This was the impetus for a flurry of appearances including a BBC Symphony Orchestra concert celebrating Stalin's birthday at which Henry Wood conducted Nancy Head's arrangement. Then, in 1942 it was re-worked by Harold J. Rome as *The Hymn of the United Nations*, although as the organisation did not as yet exist, it refers only to the loose confederation and cooperation of various countries. This proved popular enough to record under the title *The United Nations* in an orchestral arrangement by Charles O'Connell. So popular was it that another orchestration was made at the same time by Charles Brendler. In the same year, the words were also slightly changed and added to by E Yip Harburg, and it was arranged by Herbert Stothart and an uncredited Roger Edens for soprano solo (Kathryn Grayson), huge orchestra and choir, conducted by José Iturbi, for the film *Thousands Cheer* (1943).<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup> R. Bond, *Counter Plan* (sic), „Close Up”, vol. 10, No. 2, June 1933, pp. 197-198.

<sup>24</sup> It appears in the film credits as *United Nations*, on the sound track recording as *The United Nations (Victory Song)* and the sheet music (which ignores Harburg's alterations) as *United Nations on the March*.

This morale-booster featured just about every MGM star and includes a vaudeville show allowing them all to do their turns, climaxing with Shostakovich's rearranged song, rounded off with a 'Victory V' from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*. With the cold war yet to start, Shostakovich is properly credited and is even mentioned by Judy Garland in *The Joint is Really Jumpin' in Carnegie Hall*.<sup>25</sup> This boogie-woogie number is bizarrely prefaced by Iturbi's Lisztian introduction and features the lines:

They're playing  
Ta-tlee-a-ti, Ta-tlee-a-ti, with Shostakovich,  
Ta-tlee-a-ti, Ta-tlee-a-ti, Mozart and Bach,

But perhaps Shostakovich got off lightly compared to the scansion of:

Tchai-Tchai-Tchai-kovskii would really be hurt  
to hear 'em jivin' his Piano Concért,

Even though the West should have found the film politically unobjectionable there were controversies. During training, the leading character (Eddie) shoots cartoon cut-outs of Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito, but Swedish censors removed the scene, and in the final show the black performers were removed in the southern states of the USA and of course there were none to be seen in the 'multinational' choir. It was Oscar-nominated for Best Scoring of a Motion Picture, but *This is the Army* won. In any case Shostakovich would presumably not have been required to receive the statuette.

All this helped Shostakovich's image, if not his finances.<sup>26</sup> But throughout this period he stayed away from the song. He returned to it perfunctorily in 1947 as his amanuensis Lev Atovmian arranged the cantata *The Poem of*

---

<sup>25</sup> Later on proper credit would not always be given. *The Iron Curtain* (1948) led to the Soviets suing 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox for using music by Shostakovich, Khachaturian, Miaskovskii and Prokofiev without permission. It is ironic that the composers were being defended abroad whilst being vilified at home. Of course the Soviets also hoped to extract money from the studio, although why they thought there was any chance of winning the case in an American court at the time is unclear.

<sup>26</sup> In their contract with MGM (dated 5 November 1942) Am-Rus, the American distributor of Soviet films, claims to have 'full right and authority from Shostakovitch' (sic) but it is unlikely that he ever saw a contract and perhaps didn't even know about it.



*the Motherland*, which was little more than a concoction of popular hits by Shostakovich and others that ended with the *Song of the Counterplan*. Rushed into print and rehearsal for the thirtieth anniversary of the revolution, Tikhon Khrennikov denounced it as inadequate for the celebrations. Consequently, it was not performed live and had to wait until 1956 for its concert premiere, although it was broadcast on the radio and recorded. This failure adequately to recognise the revolution must have been a black mark against Shostakovich and though it may not have weighed particularly heavily in the totality of the events of 1948 it could not have helped his situation. On this occasion the *Song of the Counterplan* had failed him but he would continue to use it at politically significant moments.

If *The Poem of the Motherland* had been a failure, Shostakovich had greater hopes for *Michurin*. This biopic of the agronomist was one of many films dating from the late 1940s and early 1950s showing the lives of Soviet pioneers or Russian precursors of the revolution. Here was potential for political capital as it reflected Soviet science's attempts to unshackle itself from its Western counterpart. As the cold war developed the Soviet regime began to realign history in various ways. Marconi's development of radio was downgraded at the expense of Alexander Popov, and although Leonardo da Vinci and the Wright Brothers were acknowledged in aviation, the role of Russian balloonists was emphasised.<sup>27</sup>

The importance of agronomist Ivan Vasilievich Michurin (1855-1935) was to lay a path for Trofim Lysenko's denunciation of bourgeois Mendelism, dividing supporters and dissenters on political rather than scientific lines. But even as the film was being made, Lysenko, claiming to be basing his theories on those of his teacher Michurin and the tenets of Marx and Engels (particularly *The Dialectics of Nature*), proposed that learnt behaviour was genetically

---

<sup>27</sup> Popov was the subject of a 1949 biopic directed by Gerbert Rapoport, who also made *Cheremushki*. Among the aviators to be honoured was Aleksei Meresiev, subject of Boris Polevoi's novel *Povest' o nastoyashchem cheloveke* (*The Story of a Real Man*, 1946), a radio play (1947), Alexander Stolper's film (1948), and Prokofiev's opera (1948).

<sup>28</sup> One example of this would be the article *Results of My Sixty Years' Work and Prospects for the Future*, in: *Transactions of the I. V. Michurin Plant-Breeding Station*, vol. 2, 1934. Reprinted in I. V. Michurin, *Selected Works*, Moscow 1949.

transferable. Though this had implications for animal husbandry its social importance was unmistakable. Once one generation of Socialists had been bred they would thereafter be self-perpetuating. The 'Michurin-Lysenko Path' was hailed for disposing of the last vestiges of religious mysticism and superstition, and Lysenko, who is now commonly described as a charlatan, used his political favour to become the Zhdanov of Soviet science until the death of Stalin. Khrushchev wasted no time in severely criticising him in March 1953, and he was relieved of his post as president of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences in 1954, but somehow retained a position as personal advisor to Khrushchev on agriculture until the latter's fall in 1964. Ironically and perhaps a pointed comment on Lysenko's career, it was at this time that Lev Atovmian extracted a suite from the score of *Michurin*.

Michurin himself invented many of the stories of his humble origins, the absence of any precedent for his work, his reliance on empirical research as opposed to abstract theorising, and the rejection he suffered by the Tsarist regime until the Party (and by implication Stalin) realised his worth.<sup>28</sup> Blaming the church for opposing his work, promising that his techniques would feed the country and claiming their derivation from Soviet Marxist theories won the authorities over, he became the subject of yet another Soviet cult. His hometown of Kozlov was renamed Michurinsk,<sup>29</sup> he was recognised with state prizes, received a congratulatory telegram from Stalin, and stories and poems joined the film in honouring him.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, however, so sloppy were his methods that by 1931 only one of the hundreds of strains of fruit tree he claimed to have developed by 1931 was suitable for commercial use.

The director of *Michurin*, Alexander Dovzhenko, had recently been reprimanded for the Ukrainian nationalism of his films and the fact that they ignored Stalin's massive contribution to Soviet life. He started adapting his play *Zhizn' v tsvetu* (*Life in Bloom*) for the screen in 1944, but it was sent back for endless

---

<sup>29</sup> Unlike many other places that have reverted to their pre-Soviet names, Michurinsk still remains today.

<sup>30</sup> Amongst these are Lebedev's story *Michurin's Dream*, but he had been referred to as early as 1935 in Semyon Kirsanov's poem *Rabota v sady* (*Work in the Garden*) with the line: 'Essentially, I'm a Michurinist'. V. Lebedev, *Son Michurina (Michurin's Dream)*, 1940, an extract of which appears in: *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays and Folklore 1917–1953*, eds. J. von Geldern and

rewrites, and the film was only completed in 1948.<sup>31</sup> However, Stalin rejected it, and Dovzhenko had a nervous breakdown. After this, Dovzhenko reworked the film yet again, and typical of the regime's alternation of praise and condemnation, it was awarded a Stalin Prize.<sup>32</sup>

*Michurin* was for Dovzhenko a rare excursion outside the Ukraine, but he may have been attracted by a vehicle to show his loyalty, and the chance to shoot in colour and experiment with time-lapse photography. As it turned out, much of the film's final part was revised by Dovzhenko's wife, Iulia Solntseva, under instruction from the Party. Initially the film's release was held up to allow for the Congress of the Soviet Academy of Agricultural Sciences. On the same day that it appeared on Soviet screens, 1 January 1949, Lysenko, the president of the organisation, forecast that his methods would bring 'limitless growth in harvests' for the Soviet people<sup>33</sup>. The congress had celebrated the success of 'the struggle to ideologically rout Mendelism-Morganism', and by that time Lysenko's advocacy had helped make Michurinism 'the sole correct line in the biological sciences.'<sup>34</sup> Although politically committed, Dovzhenko's films include many lyrical interludes, but in *Michurin* he had to add cruder material, such as lampooning visitors from America and the church. After the glories of his silent films, *Michurin* was a sad end to Dovzhenko's career and it was omitted from the 1975 retrospective of his work at London's National Film Theatre, although his wartime documentaries were included even though they were a much more slender part of his work.<sup>35</sup>

R. Stites, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1995, pp. 453-455. Originally from F. A. Fridliand, M. F. Robinson, *Chteniia*, Moscow 1950, pp. 80-81.

<sup>31</sup> *Life in Bloom* was the title under which the film was released in the United States.

<sup>32</sup> Presumably some early forms were considered acceptable as excerpts were published. A. Dovzhenko, *Zhizn' v tsvetu*, „Iskusstvo kino”, No. 1, 1946, pp. 6-13.

<sup>33</sup> Lysenko quoted in D. Jarovsky, *The Lysenko Affair*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press 1970, p. 143.

<sup>34</sup> Quotations from P. N. Yakovlev, *Introduction*, in: I. V. Michurin, *Selected Works*, op. cit., p. XIX; and T. Dobzhansky, *Russian Genetics*, in: *Soviet Science*, ed. R. C. Christman, Washington DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science 1952, p. 1 respectively.

<sup>35</sup> *Programme*, National Film Theatre, August-November 1975, pp. 33-36.

<sup>36</sup> L. Schwarz, *On Modern Film Music*, „Sovetskaia Muzyka”, No. 3, 1948, p. 6. Cited in T. K. Egorova, *Soviet Film: an Historical Survey*, Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Press 1997, p. 291.

Shostakovich had not been the first choice as composer of the music to *Michurin*, but Gavril Popov's score was criticised for its 'formalism and excessively complicated musical language' so that 'even correctly reproduced Russian songs were distorted by the composer's harmonic refinements.'<sup>36</sup> For Khrennikov, Shostakovich's work was much more acceptable, making one 'glad of its warmth and humanity.'<sup>37</sup> Though not a lover of Dovzhenko's work in general, Shostakovich admired the photography and enjoyed working on the film.<sup>38</sup> Possibly inspired by the rural theme, Shostakovich also claimed that his work on the film prompted him to compose the oratorio *Pesni o lesakh* (*The Song of the Forests*)<sup>39</sup> In the event, the *Song of the Counterplan* makes only a brief appearance in the film and provides no thematic material for the rest of the score. With a stirring speech, Michurin sends a trainload of people to instigate his methods in the collective farms, and they leave singing the song. As in the Leningrad factory of 1932, their efforts will doubtless lead to the 'limitless growth in harvests' and an overfulfilment of the plan – but this time of fruit rather than turbines. Naturally, the song was included when Atovmian came to compile the suite in 1964, the centrepiece of *Michurin's Monologue*.

In the late 1940s, the *Song of the Counterplan* was still an immense hit overseas despite the state of East-West relations, and when a Soviet delegation (including Shostakovich) arrived at the American Congress of Scientific and Art Workers in Defence of Peace in March 1949 they were greeted by 25,000 people singing the song.<sup>40</sup> It was also sung in school assemblies all over the world for many years, and in New York it was only in the 1950s that this practice died out. Shostakovich also wrote of it being used as a wedding song in Switzerland,<sup>41</sup> and by now the 'united nations' and 'peace' associations of the song had obviously stuck in the West. On Human Rights Day (December 10<sup>th</sup> 1949) at Carnegie Hall Leonard Bernstein conducted the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Collegiate Chorale in an arrangement by a composer identified only as

---

<sup>37</sup> T. Khrennikov, *Muzyka v kino*, „Iskusstvo Kino”, No. 1, 1950, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Even so in 1967 he wrote to Isaak Glikman: 'I really cannot understand why Eisenstein, and for that matter Dovzhenko, are considered such geniuses. I don't much like their work.' I. Glikman, *Story of a Friendship: the Letters of Dmitry Shostakovich to Isaak Glikman 1941–1975*, trans. A. Phillips, London: Faber and Faber 2001, pp. 146, 298-99.

<sup>39</sup> M. Iakovlev, *D. Shostakovich: o vremeni i o sebe*, Moscow, 1980, p. 178.

<sup>40</sup> D. Rabinovich, *Dmitri Shostakovich, Composer*, Moscow 1959.

<sup>41</sup> D. Shostakovich, *Kino kak...*, op. cit., p. 355.

Langendoen. This was followed a few years later by Leopold Stokowski's orchestral arrangement under the title *The United Nations March*, which was performed at the first United Nations Day Concert (24 October 1954) in the General Assembly Hall of the newly built United Nations Headquarters complex in New York.

The year 1956 marked Shostakovich's fiftieth birthday. At the official celebrations, he was regaled with a Young Pioneers' performance of the *Song of the Counterplan* that perhaps inspired him to arrange it for voice and piano, and reuse it in *Moscow Cheremushki*, which he wrote in 1957–8<sup>42</sup>. Cheremushki is a large 1950s housing estate to the south west of Moscow named after the bird cherry tree and the plot follows various residents' attempts to secure a flat there. The 1959 première was the occasion for several articles under Shostakovich's name.<sup>43</sup> He had 'worked on the operetta with great enthusiasm' and hoped it would not be his last. The plot 'touches in a gay, dynamic form, on the vital question of the house-building programme in the Soviet Union' in order to make a 'jolly and lively show'. He also claimed that 'Now and again I parody elements from music that used to be popular not long ago and quote some songs by Soviet composers.' If it means anything at all, this allusion to music that had fallen out of favour is a tongue in cheek reference to his own music.

But in private he was less enthusiastic about the work, written as a favour to Grigorii Stoliarov, the Moscow Operetta Theatre director, and director of the production of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* that had enraged Stalin. Shostakovich wrote to Glikman that he was 'burning with shame', and that he need not waste his time on this 'boring, unimaginative, stupid' piece.<sup>44</sup> Despite this, however, Glikman suggested a film version some years later, and Shostakovich acquiesced. Glikman cut some of the dialogue that they agreed was too slangy<sup>45</sup> and Shostakovich wrote some new numbers for Rapoport's film with the result that the composer revised his opinion, even preferring the film to the stage produc-

---

<sup>42</sup> He also composed a version of the *Song of the Counterplan* for solo voice and chorus in 1961, the year before the operetta was filmed.

<sup>43</sup> The following quotes are taken from: „Sovetskaia Muzyka”, No. 1, 1959; „Pravda”, 1 January 1959; and „Literatura i zhizn'”, 23 January 1959 (the day before the première). All appear in L. Grigoryev, Ia. Platek, *Dmitry Shostakovich: About Himself and His Times*, trans. A. and N. Roxburgh, Moscow 1981, pp. 199–201.

<sup>44</sup> I. Glikman, op. cit., pp. 79, 269–71.

<sup>45</sup> In the same way he had revised the text of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* to make it 'less coarse'.

tion because of the effectiveness of the fantasy sequences.<sup>46</sup> The audience shared his enthusiasm and it became a regular fixture on Soviet television for many years. There was also one unexpected outcome as, when it was prepared for publication, one of the editors was Irina Supinskaia, later to become Shostakovich's third wife.

Writers Vladimir Mass and Mikhail Chervinskii took the opportunity of the more relaxed atmosphere to make the sort of criticisms that also appear in films such as *Karnivalnaia noch* (*Carnival Night*, 1956) and *Letiat zhuravli* (*The Cranes are Flying*, 1957) and Ehrenburg's era-defining novella *Ottepel'* (*The Thaw*) that was published in *Novyi mir* in spring 1954. However, the satire is mild and certainly never questions the correctness of socialism or the Party, but only the behaviour of certain individuals. Even so, events were moving so quickly that the observation that *Cheremushki* itself was a sugary view of Soviet life, a comment acceptable in 1959, was cut from the film version three years later.

Its subject matter and characters such as a construction worker make *Cheremushki* sound all too close to dreary propaganda or the 1930s 'industrialisation' films, and it was this and the large forces demanded by the score that made western producers overlook the piece. Soviet operetta theatres had large musical resources and could fulfil stage directions such as 'The stage changes into a cosy room. From the wings a ZIL refrigerator emerges followed by two armchairs and a vase with flowers. The furniture dances.'<sup>47</sup> But as Gerard McBurney notes: 'there is after all something intrinsically hilarious about silly tunes, not to mention the soap opera-like passions of the characters, being belted out by or over a large symphony orchestra.'<sup>48</sup> Although kept from the Western stage, the film was briefly released in the United States under the title *Song over Moscow*, but its British stage première took place only in 1994.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Isaak Glikman in the documentary *Cheremushki: Another Bite of the Cherry*, BBC Wales, 1995. Broadcasted BBC2, 20 August 1995.

<sup>47</sup> From the stage directions. Quoted in D. Pountney, *Shostakovich meets Offenbach*, "Opera", October 1994, pp. 1160-1165.

<sup>48</sup> G. McBurney, *Dear Shostakovich...*, "BBC Music Magazine", vol. 3, No. 8, April 1995, pp. 9-10. The magazine was accompanied by a CD with extracts performed by Pimlico Opera using McBurney's reduced orchestration.

<sup>49</sup> Pimlico Opera's *Cheremushki 1958* used a reduced orchestration by Gerard McBurney who, with Jim Holmes, arranged it for a larger band under the title *Paradise Moscow* for Opera North in 2001.

Shostakovich added to the fun of *Cheremushki* by including musical quotes from Tchaikovsky and Soviet pop songs, as well as, most glaringly, Solevov-Sedoy's worldwide hit *Podmoskovskaia vechera* (*Midnight in Moscow*). Mocking petty officials was acceptable at the time, but Shostakovich went one step further by combining *The Dance of the Bureaucrats* from *The Bolt*, the long-forgotten ballet about wreckers, and a fanfare heralding Stalin's arrival from the secretly written satire *Rayok*. None but his closest friends would have known this piece and even they may not have spotted the joke, which was probably more for his own amusement than anyone else's.

Shostakovich also regurgitated the *Song of the Counterplan* in *Cheremushki*, but the new words could hardly be a bigger contrast to the original's call to industrial arms as Lidochka laments that the time she spent studying at school has left her ignorant of love. Audiences could not have missed the tune and the witty 'realignment' of the words. It also reappears in Act Two when the 'lovers' agree to part but, in a slow variation, each regrets that they cannot get the other to see how they feel. As in the 1930s, the role and nature of love was being analysed in films such as *The Cranes are Flying*, with its deep erotic charge and *Urok v zhizn'* (*Lesson of Life* – released in Britain as *The Wife*, 1957) which questions whether a woman should stay in an unsatisfying marriage. Though the times and the context may have changed, Lidochka was a contemporary character struggling with the same sorts of questions. She was not looking for something revolutionary, but for a traditional relationship, just as Natasha in *Lesson of Life* decides to stay with her husband despite his inadequacies. This constitutes the most complex use of the *Song of the Counterplan*. At its simplest level, it allows people to feel the familiar return of an old friend. Beyond that it compares Soviet love in the 1930s and the 1950s. But at a third level, as *Cheremushki* was being constructed in record time using the latest techniques, once again we see an attempt to fulfil a hopelessly ambitious plan that it is only achieved through fiddling the figures. *Cheremushki* still (just about) stands, an indictment of Khrushchev's housing policy, and as Igor Barbashov, the Moscow Operetta Theatre producer, noted: *The Song of the Counterplan* was virtually Khrushchev's theme tune'.<sup>50</sup> The area was renamed the Brezhnev District after the death of the leader in 1982 – one might almost think that a bitter comment on the years of stagnation – but in 1988 reverted to its old name.

---

<sup>50</sup> *Cheremushki: Another Bite of the Cherry...*, op. cit.

Shostakovich seems not to have returned to the *Song of the Counterplan* again after *Cheremushki*, but others were happy to use it, and it retained its status as an unofficial 'folk' song, rather like Knipper's *Meadowland*, from his *Fourth Symphony*.<sup>51</sup> Apart from its use in films, it also got an official endorsement as Moscow Radio's call signal,<sup>52</sup> and was heard in Elem Klimov's comic semi-'documentary' *Sport, Sport, Sport* (1971). The tone of *Sport, Sport, Sport* may be guessed at from the subtitle *Neskol'ko istorii, proiskhodiashchikh na arene stadiona, na tribunakh pod tribunami* (*Several Stories which Happen in a Stadium, on Podia and Under Podia*). Weaving footage from various sporting events into his story, Klimov creates a collage where reality and fiction merge, mocking the cold-war use of sporting achievement as a weapon. Oddly this is reminiscent of Renoir's *La vie est à nous*, discussed above. The work is astringently scored by Schnittke. At one point the team needs a morale-booster and so someone turns up with an accordion to give a rendition of the *Song of the Counterplan*, presumably to ensure that the planned output (this time of medals) will be overfulfilled just as happened in the Leningrad turbine factory and the Michurinised collective farms.

Therefore, as Shostakovich became more outspoken (musically speaking) in his criticism of the regime after the early 1960s, he was less inclined to re-use the *Song of the Counterplan*, although he still turned out occasional official pieces. It is tempting to see the various regenerations of the song as talismans or attempts to remind the regime that he could come up with the goods. The wisdom of this is endorsed by the fact that at Shostakovich's funeral, as Mark Lubotskii notes in his diary, the *Song of the Counterplan* was cited as evidence of his genius. But on another level it was an attack on the constant deceit of the Soviet Union, and the song's popularity illustrated how people were buying into that comfortable self-deception.

---

<sup>51</sup> Both composers 'enjoy' a semi-anonymous status with regard to these works, many people expressing surprise that they are not genuine folk songs.

<sup>52</sup> I. Shilova, op. cit.



### Z fabryki do mieszkania: trzydzieści lat *Piosenki na dzień dobry*

*Piosenka na dzień dobry* jest najczęściej słuchaną kompozycją Szostakowicza, posiada intrygującą historię, należy jednak do najrzadziej badanych jego utworów. Szostakowicz zaadaptował i ponownie wykorzystał tę pieśń w kilku utworach. Niniejszy artykuł podąża ich śladami, badając jak zmieniające się konteksty czyniły te wznowienia uzasadnionymi, a także krótko przygląda się przyjęciu pieśni na Zachodzie.

Szostakowicz napisał *Piosenkę na dzień dobry* dla filmu o industrializacji pt. *Turbina 50 000* (1932), poświęconego staraniom fabryki turbin, by dać odpór „szkodnikom” i przekroczyć plan. Nie wracał do niej przez wiele lat, niemniej, kiedy został poddany silnej krytyce podczas „żdanowszczyzny”, ponownie wykorzystał ją w kantacie *Poemat o Ojczyźnie* i stalinowskim filmie biograficznym *Czarodziej sadów* (1949), które były w pewnym stopniu zarówno próbą rehabilitacji, jak i jedynym możliwym rodzajem pracy. Na koniec wykorzystał ją w operetce z czasów odwilży pt. *Moskiewskie Czeremuszki* (1959, sfilmowanej 1962), w której pozornie łagodnie prześmiewając politykę mieszkaniową Chruszczowa, używa tej pieśni, aby nadać jej bardziej mroczne znaczenie.

Zdobycze industrializacji w Związku Radzieckim okazały się jak zawsze w znacznym stopniu mistyfikacją, różne odmiany owoców wyhodowane przez Miczurina nie udały się, a osiągnięcia takie jak Czeremuszki zakończyły się porażką zarówno pod względem architektonicznym, jak i popularności. To wszystko było reprezentatywne dla kłamstwa państwowego i skłonności ludzi do samooszukiwania się. W wymiarze osobistym Szostakowicz wykorzystywał *Piosenkę na dzień dobry* w najbardziej niebezpiecznych dla siebie momentach politycznych, przypominając w ten sposób władzy o swojej umiejętności poruszania powszechnych uczuć, innymi razy wykorzystywał ją, by w ezopowy sposób krytykować ustrój.

Artykuł przygląda się także wykorzystaniu *Piosenki na dzień dobry* na Zachodzie, gdzie pojawiła się w propagandowym filmie *Życie należy do nas* (1936) Jeana Renoira, była również rozmaicie adaptowana, m.in. jako kulminacyjny punkt wyprodukowanego przez MGM filmu *Thousands Cheer* (1943) George’a Sidneya. Po tym, jak stała się światowym przebojem, śpiewano ją na szkolnych akademiach na całym świecie, funkcjonowała także jako pieśń weselna w Szwajcarii.