

## CINEMATOGRAPHIC STYLE IN SOVIET FILM

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Soviet era films were either approved by the government, or they were suppressed by the government. The primary distinction between these different sets of films was their portrayal of Soviet society, and communist ideals. Many of the films that were suppressed by the government were critical of Soviet society, or they could be interpreted as critical of society. The films that were officially supported by the government, there was no possible way to interpret them as critical of Soviet society, they were inarguably pro communism. Soviet films of the 1970-1980s possess two distinct cinematographic styles. Films which have been categorized as non-approved films share a simpler cinematographic style, which is distant from the style of government approved films.

Camera movement represents an important role in modern film, and in the early days of film, cameras were not able to be moved as freely. In many of the earliest films, most of the scenes consisted of static wide camera, because it was not possible for easy camera motion or angling. The cinematography of films can be split into three different components, the angle, the distance, and the camera's movement. The combinations of these components distinguish different types of cinematography. Each of the different components of the framing can be used to affect one's interpretation of the film. For example, a camera that is very mobile could infer a more fast paced scene, or a more frantic one.

In non-approved films, such as those by German, specifically *Hard to be a God*(2013), use large amounts of motion, lots of not straight framing, and significantly more dynamic and active camera motion, to convey an air of confusion, and disorientation. Contrastingly films that were approved by the government such as Viktorov's *Per Aspera Ad Astra*(1981), primary use table cameras, and smooth directed motion, resulting in a more grounded and clear film. Although these films came out at significantly different dates, *Hard to be a God* exemplifies Aleksei German's cinematographic style which he had already developed by his earlier films, and in his film *My Friend Ivan Lapshin*(1984), which is a contemporary of *Per Aspera Ad Astra*, also clearly demonstrates this cinematographic style.

#### PARTS???

*Per Aspera Ad Astra* was clearly a critique of capitalist society, it is clear that the planet Dessa represents a capitalist society, which needed to be saved by the superior technology of the communist Earth. This clear support of communism and critique of capitalism is why this film was approved by the government, as it at no point raised any questions about communism.

*Hard to be a God* is not unabashedly supportive of communist society. In fact, there are many connections that can be made to the film directly commenting on the shortcomings of communism and the soviet union. Throughout the film there is a connection from the Greys and the Blacks to the Soviet union and the government leaders. This relatively clear critique on soviet society and communist ideals would have clearly resulted in this film being disapproved of by the government.

**Camera stability.** HG is very shaky, and appears to be hand held, and lots of movement, while PAAA was very stable, and for the most part either appeared to

be on a tripod, or a dolly, but for the most part it was stationary or a simple pan. The instability of HG results in a more chaotic feeling film. This chaotic feeling results in some estrangement, forcing the viewer to more actively pay attention to what is happening causing more critical thought.

**Framing.** All camera motion in PAAA is intended to keep the focus in frame at all times. In HG the camera appears to have a mind of its own, frequently losing attention and drifting off of the main focus.

**Use of 4th wall break?** In both films the characters often look directly at the camera, but only in HG do the characters actively interact with the camera, there are many instances of characters tapping on or waving at the camera. This makes the viewer feel more like a part of the action, and that they are another character in the film.