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## History and memory: the left melancholy in *The Last Bolshevik* by Chris Marker<sup>2</sup>

*História e memória: a melancolia de esquerda em Elegia a Alexandre de Chris Marker*

### Abstract

The image of the history in the film *The last Bolshevik* by Chris Marker consists of a double act of remembrance: remembering the friend and deceased filmmaker, Alexandre Medvedkin, as well as reviewing the history of communism as it succumbs. I discuss the film in the perspective of Enzo Traverso's notion of "left melancholy." The melancholy in the film seeks to redeem the insurgents who have succumbed by fighting for an authentic utopia. In making the double mourning, *The Last Bolshevik* assumes the pathos of defeat, but aims to save the victims by remembering the idea of the Medvedkin for a cine-train, almost forgotten were it not for the pages celebrated by Jay Leyda in his book *Kino: History of Russian cinema and Soviet Union*.

### Keywords

Documentary Cinema. Cinema and Archives. Cinema and History. Cinema and memory. History and Memory

### Resumo

A imagem da história no filme *Elegia a Alexandre de Chris Marker* consiste em um ato duplo de rememoração: lembrar do amigo e cineasta falecido, Alexandre Medvedkin, bem como rever a história do comunismo no momento em que ele sucumbe. Discuto o filme na perspectiva da noção de "melancolia de esquerda" de Enzo Traverso. A melancolia no filme busca redimir os insurgentes que sucumbiram lutando por uma utopia autêntica. Ao fazer o duplo luto, *Elegia a Alexandre* assume o pathos da derrota, mas almeja salvar as vítimas lembrando da proposta do cinema-trem de Medvedkin, praticamente esquecido não fossem as páginas celebradas por Jay Leyda em seu livro *Kino: História do cinema russo e soviético*.

### Palavras-chave

Cinema Documentário. Cinema e Arquivo. Cinema e História. Cinema e memória. História e Memória.

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I discussed this Chris Marker movie in another article without devoting myself to a more detailed analysis, that I try to do here (Costa, 2014).

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1- Free translation. "Death is always the country where we go when we lose our memory." From the movie *Les statues meurent aussi*.

"La mort est toujours le pays où on va en perdant la mémoire"<sup>1</sup>

Chris Marker

The image of the story created by Chris Marker with his film *The Last Bolshevik*, produced in 1992 and released the following year, consists of a double act of remembrance, a double work of mourning: remembering the late friend, the filmmaker Alexandre Medvedkin, as well as review the history of communism as it succumbs. The street effects of the liberal reforms of Mikhail Gorbachov's Perestroika (following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) situate the present of the film embodiment. Marker goes back to the past of Russian filmmaker Alexandre Medvedkin who experienced the major events of the 20th century in the communist country - the October Revolution, the Civil War, the Stalinism, the trials and the murders - and died just in the year of the fall of the Wall. Medvedkin was born in 1900 and several years of his life coincide with important dates in Russian history. In Marker's filmography, history has relevance, but its realization joins the work of memory. George Steiner's opening quote contemplates this perspective: "It is not the past that dominates us. It is the images of the past". With a gesture of remembrance of an individual life, Marker revises the collective history of the particular left-wings in the context of Soviet communism, whose end carries with it the hope of a revolutionary future.

The *Last Bolshevik* work out losses, but the defeat in the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the liberal reforms of Perestroika is so radical that in the face of mourning there is no room for revolutionary action. However, *The Last Bolshevik* does not embark on the pathological melancholy that simplistic perceptions make of Freud's classic text (FREUD, 2011). As Maria Rita Kehl clarifies, there is a distinction between the narcissistic neurosis of melancholia and the suffering that characterizes the bereaved in their work of accepting the loss (KEHL, 2011, p. 18). In pathological melancholy, the depressive pole has as its counterpart the mania, "a radically opposite mood state" (KEHL, 2011, p. 21). The double mourning observed in *The Last Bolshevik* revisits the work of the Soviet filmmaker with admiration and critical distance, beyond a profoundly questioning the history of Soviet utopia at the moment of its disappearance. Chris Marker never hid the political force from the experience of defeat. In his cinema, grief over loss belongs to the dialectic of resistance. But at that particular historical moment, in the face of the ruins of communism, it was necessary to conduct a reassembly of the past that would allow us to look for evidence of an authentic utopia and rethink the new paths to emancipation. As Enzo Traverso states: "Melancholy cannot be limited to mourning the lost utopia; it must unite with its reconstitution" (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 23).

Traverso's book, *Mélancolie de gauche: La Force D'une Tradition Caché (XIXe - XXIIe siècle)*, elaborates the history of this hidden feeling and differentiates two variants: the melancholy of revolt and the melancholy of defeat. The latter,

although present in the Marxist tradition, was sublimated by the pathos of action necessary for the memory of the future. The intention of the Italian historian is to understand the mourning experienced by the left-wings in the context of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The melancholy perceived at the time was not new, although it did not belong to the canonical narrative of socialism and communism (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 9). It dates back to the 19th century as a secret, disguised tradition. Even covert, melancholy had a privileged relationship with the memory transmitted by Marxism, because it was linked to the project of revolutionary transformation of the world. In Traverso's words: "Melancholy is inseparable from the struggles and hopes, utopias and revolutions of which it constitutes the dialectical coating" (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 218). While Marxist historiography postulated communism as telos, as the purpose of history, memory aimed at the future of the past. It was a memory for the future. "Certainly, the memory of revolutions was not limited to the jubilatory moment of emancipation lived as an action because it also included the tragedy of its defeats" (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 76).

Spanning a varied set of theories, images, paintings, photographs and movies, Traverso does not ignore Chris Marker. He devotes a portion of the third chapter, *Red shadows*, to analyzing one of the most important films of Marker's militant phase. In *A Grin Without a Cat* (1978) the melancholy dimension is constituent:

When he decided to make this film, Marker had in mind "the crushing of the guerrillas, the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Chilean tragedy and the Chinese myth" of the Cultural Revolution, all the events that had turned post May 68 into "a long succession of defeats" (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 125-128).<sup>2</sup>

The melancholy of the revolt was lived and worked by the entire generation of Soviet filmmakers during the early decades of the 20th century, such as Vertov, Eisenstein and Medvedkin. *A Grin Without a Cat* is considered by Traverso as a film equally marked by the pathos of action and not that of defeat. In the 1970s, defeat did not prevent the purpose of the struggle – the revolution – from being glimpsed even when it was critical of the Soviet government.<sup>3</sup> In *A Grin Without a Cat*, Cuba's failure to meet Soviet demands for the deal needed to be analyzed and understood, but the film's perspective does not hesitate about the ways or continuity of the struggle. Traverso contests the kind of depoliticized and conformist melancholy that resurfaced in the context of the fall of the Wall. He realizes the privilege given to the memory and melancholy of defeat, but this is censored and concealed by "a public memory that gives no space but to the victims" (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 219). The melancholy that interests him is that which seeks to redeem the victims as insurgent subjects and not as objects of compassion.

2- Free translation. Original text: "Lorsqu'il décida de réaliser ce film, Marker avait en tête « l'écrasement des guérillas, l'occupation de la Tchécoslovaquie, la tragédie chilienne et le mythe chinois » de la Révolution culturelle, tous les événements qui avaient transformé l'après-Mai 68 en "une longue succession de défaites" (TRAVERSO, 2016, p. 125-128).

3- See film study of Chris Marker's *La bataille des millions* by Carolina Amaral Aguiar to understand how the analysis of defeat by the French filmmaker could result in the broadening of the fight's actions (AGUIAR, 2015, pp. 102-111).

At the end of the 20th century, the melancholy was so deep that it could no longer be sublimated or become a stimulus to the struggle. In his films of the 60s and 70s, Marker presented the moments of defeat accompanied by the funeral of a militant, always preceded by this pathos of revolutionary action. *Cuba si* (1961) even has a certain lyrical tone that is no longer possible when Marker realizes *The Last Bolshevik*. When making the double mourning in the context of the end of communism, *The Last Bolshevik* assumes the pathos of defeat, redeeming the dead and the utopia then totally won, but without foreseeing the continuation of the actions of resistance. The film analyzes the tragic defeat of communist utopia, seeking to find undeveloped germs that could even point to the survival of utopia.

### **The Structure Of The Movie And The Critical Image Of History**

*The Last Bolshevik* has an epistolary structure that is divided into two parts and an interlock: "The Kingdom of Shadows" and "The Shadows of the Kingdom." With the intermission "Cat listening to music", the narrator takes up the purpose of the film presented at the beginning: "Alexandre Ivanovitch Medvedkin, born in 1900 and killed in 1989, was reproaching me for not writing him. Today I write him." The French filmmaker writes six letters, motivated by his friend's disapproval in an interview filmed in 1984. The first three letters of the first part praise cinema, particularly the state-censored Medvedkin production.

The title of the first part, "The Shadow Kingdom," alludes to an expression used by Gorki in recounting his experience with the projection of the Lumière brothers. Happiness celebrated by the narrator as "The Most Beautiful and Funniest" Medvedkin's movie, summons up other images and provokes the narrator's personal reflections. The second part, "The Shadows of the Kingdom," deals with the disillusionment and disenchantment of Soviet authoritarianism, the censorship of Medvedkin films, the terror of the Communist state, the false judgments, the murders committed. In both parts, a certain critical distance is perceived in relation to the images, even when the author of the missives is empathetic. The narrator puts himself in a distant perspective from what he sees and allows himself to quickly replace one image with another, eventually commenting on the difference through the voice over. At other times, the clash between images, between a testimony and the image, or between two testimonies, establishes a critical disagreement or a reciprocal contradiction.

Empathetic to Medvedkin, Marker is not fully identified with his friend. He notices a certain naivete when the Russian reports in an interview that in 1919 he was in the 1st Cavalry of the Red Army under General Marshall Budyonny. As one of the testimonies states, Medvedkin fought in the civil war which for him was sacred. It is the Russian filmmaker who speaks: "It was a romantic army and possibly the most fantastic period of my life. The red knights of the Revolution ragged, barefoot, but terrible". This assessment leads the narrator to contrast this position with that of Isaac Babel, "a Jew of lenses among anti-Semitic Cossacks

(who) was not romantic." And quotes a fragment from the writer's diary: "The Jews awaited the liberating Soviets and suddenly: the screams, the whips, the dirty racists". Much of the first letter unravels his friend's contradictions, bringing the horses, protagonists of the civil war and prestigious characters from Soviet cinema. The horses appear to make more complex the difference between Medvedkin and Babel's positions on the Red Army in which they both fought. Themed by Medvedkin in a burlesque scene, the horse is a speaker and rises to the podium with a kind of burqa or cape of the Caucasus to speak to the military, causing great confusion. Babel's critical inflection in his collection of Red Cavalry short stories published in 1920 is not appreciated by General Budyonny of the 1st Cavalry, pursuing the writer who was killed in 1939.

The images are not innocent. This clarity establishes Marker's critical perception of the visual archives that he incorporates in his film, interrogating what one sees, the ways of seeing and what is absent from what is shown. The first letter considers the overlapping dates involving Medvedkin's individual life and historical events. Starting from the birth of the honored filmmaker, the narrator refers to the coincidence of this individual event with the date of the picture taken of Prince Youssoupov that same year of 1900. This motivates the entry into the flow of images from a documentary film record that refers to the social context prior to the revolution. It is a parade held in celebration of the tricentennial of the ruling Romanovs. About the images in this 1913 archive, the narrator focuses his attention on a fat soldier whose gesture orders the public to remove their caps in front of the passing nobility. This film excerpt allows the narrator to mention, for the first time, the current context from which he sets out to make this trip to the past.

Since the famous hobby is going back to finding the culprits of so many crimes, of so many woes poured on Russia for a century, do not forget this fat man who, before Stalin, before Lenin, this fat man who orders the poor to salute the rich.<sup>4</sup>

4- Transcription of the author of the narrator's speech of the film being analyzed.

One can extract from the narrator's intervention in *The Last Bolshevik* mentioned above the ethical perspective developed in the film: even radically disapproving of the authoritarianism of Soviet communism, one does not abandon the ideals of transformation in which one still believes, after all the despotism of the state is prior to the Soviets ("do not forget that ... before Stalin, before Lenin this fat who orders the poor to salute the rich"). The narrator's assessment of the attitude of the fat soldier brings the perspective of the story crossed by subjective reasons. The extract of the document with the commemoration of the nobility is followed by personal memories regarding the production of the filmmaker friend. "These soldiers, you didn't miss your movie," says the author of the letter. He refers to the movie *Happiness* of which we see an excerpt with soldiers wearing masks that resemble the

face of the nobility's guard. The soldiers come for the character of peasant Khmir as he tries to commit suicide because he is deeply in debt. The voice over endorses the finding of the Russian film: "If the peasant dies, who will feed Russia?"

The memory of the friend and the social history of the communist century coexist in intertwined dependence. The coincidence of the dates shown at the beginning of the film reveals this link between the life of Medvedkin and the collective life. For Marker, history has never been disconnected from memory, even in its most militant moments. Since the late 20th century, memory and history no longer split as two distinct modalities of relationship with the past, one subjective and one objective (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2003, pp. 59-88). The subjective-emotional and anthropological dimension of memory merges with the objective research of archives to obtain a new reading of the past from the ruins of the present. The help of testimonials from friends of the Russian director – filmmakers, screenwriters, videographers, young historians, but also Medvedkn's wife, the wife of writer Isaac Babel – adds and transforms the work of reading the archives. These are people who lived with Medvedkin and lived the Communist era more or less. The voice of the narrator brings together the various voices and the multiplicity of images, but does not unify the heterogeneity of the visions of the past that are produced from the testimonies and documents involved.

The first visual document, the film recording of the honored filmmaker's body and voice, stems from the archives of *The Last Bolshevik* own director. With its epistolary structure, the film starts from this memory printed on film where the dead man speaks directly to the French filmmaker's camera. These images belong at first to the events of Chris Marker's life. Memory is an individual faculty linked to a body, to asubjectivity, but as Maurice Halbwaks well acknowledged, these impressions of the past are not isolated in each person: "We often reintegrate our memories into a space and time about whose divisions we understand with others" (HALBWAKS, 2003, p. 76). This space-time is the present where the images of the past, the memories of the testimonies, manifest in a plural form – the collective memory, forms of past presence. As Marie-Claire Lavabre explains, quoting Pierre Nora: "It is not history, in the sense that it tends to the intelligibility of the past; It is not exactly a memory either: it is 'general economics and past management in the present'" (LAVABRE, 1998, p. 48).

Managing the images of the past with those who lived with Medvedkine during Soviet communism is the founding poetic act of the film. It involves two different gestures: collecting files and testimonies and organizing them through a montage that brings up the contradictions. The transfer of the found documents and the filmed testimonials will come into *The Last Bolshevik* as fragments taken from the real world by an act of choice and transposed into the space of the film. The reassembly of history is relativized by the subjectivity involved. *The Last Bolshevik* is completely narrated by the character "Chris Marker" without, however, becoming an autobiographical documentary. There is nothing close to an account of itself, nor does any space of the narrator's intimacy appear, although the subjective perspective appears in this critical reassembly of the time of history.

The gesture of the transposition of an object from the world into the space of art is similar to that performed by avant-garde and post-vanguard artists. But it is necessary to differentiate certain aspects. For a ready-made, Duchamp removes an object from the space of use and recontextualizes it as the emblem of serial creation in art space without any modification of the object, although there is semantic transformation. The gesture of appropriation in Duchamp does not alter the serial object at all. It only operates the change of context to another pragmatic-semantic field, establishing critical distance, contradiction. Another thing occurs in *The Last Bolshevik*. In the work with the archives and the testimonies, the gesture reassembles the historical time from the present. Walter Benjamin suggests some specificity in this operation in which the writing of history proceeds by a montage at the moment when the present is captured by the images of thought in remembrance. This act assumes a vision of history where coexist different temporalities and a link between history and memory. This is what Márcio Seligmann-Silva explains, quoting Benjamin himself:

The dialectic images are further defined by Benjamin as "the involuntary memory of redeemed humanity", that is, the now that underlies the knowledge of history structures, for Benjamin, the recognition of an image of the past that, in fact, is a "critical image of memory" (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2003, p. 399).

Trying to understand Benjamin's expression, "only dialectical images are authentic images," George Didi-Huberman defines critical image as an image that questions the image but also problematizes our ways of viewing it (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 1998, pp. 171-172). The reassembly of time made by Chris Marker in *The Last Bolshevik* has this critical dimension of image and history, interrogating our ways of viewing visual archives and understanding the past from them. The proper image is not literal (tautological), that is, it does not show what one sees only. It does not say, "This is what you see" on the surface, for she is constantly being interrogated, suspended, replaced by another who comments on her. It is not intended to be transparent to the historical referent. The image, through montage, suspends the temporal continuum as a caesura in the movement of the narrator's thought. The senses of what one sees are thickened by the combination with other images and voices. The images of the past create a thick temporality not submissive to the abstract time of historicist history.

### **Condensations, Substitutions And Forgetting: Traces Of Authentic Utopia**

The fourth letter of the film, like the others, condenses images and events, shifts and replaces impressions at an arduous speed for the viewer who seeks

to follow and understand that excess. The letter begins by recalling Medvedkin's movie *The New Moscow*, whose setting is compared to those of Busby Berkeley, the American director of musical films and the inventor of fantastic kaleidoscopic choreography. The narrator and the guests speak of Medvedkin's love for animals, from Happiness's and Ariadne's horse to *The New Moscow* "strand of a pig". They comment on censorship, its bureaucrats. Viktor Diomen, screenwriter for several Russian films, recalls the ban on Happiness, considered by some critic as pro-Bukharin, which would have spurred censorship in later Medvedkin films. "Totalitarian art tried to level everything," says Lev Rochal. They also speak of Vertov's request to cameraman Yacov Tolchan to film Stalin in the Kremlin, of fear, of trials. Memories of this letter include the regime's favorite filmmakers such as Mikheil Chiaureli, the trial and execution of Nikolai Bukharin, the 1970s Costa-Grave film *The Confession*, which was screened in Russia only, due to censorship in 1990.

From the movie *The Confession*, you see an extract and you hear: "I overheard. The testimonies, the confessions ... It is a scam. They recited, as if giving a lesson. I didn't believe in this process." They talk about Bukharin's judgment as a simulation. Following the fragment of the Costa-Gravas film, follows a film document of a royal trial with the commentary of the author of the missives: "They were films, with all the elements of a movie: the previously written script, and decorated papers. There were even stars, the inspectors." This is the moment when are questioned false judgments, illegitimate confessions, brutal murders. Ultimately, the shadows of the kingdom. At one point in this fourth letter, the narrator recalls Roland Freisler, the judge of the Third Reich, and states his sadness in comparing Berlin and Moscow: "In the kingdom of the shadows there is a strange set of mirrors". Marker appropriates images from different sources, replacing and condensing a huge volume of visual material to constitute this double act of memory in the film *The Last Bolshevik*. The condensation of impressions, substitutions and forgetting led Sigmund Freud to understand the image not as a picture but as a scene. The "scene" described Freud better this movement of images, the attraction and repulsion between them in memory (FREUD, 1996). The recollection we saw in *The Last Bolshevik* comes close to what Freud called the "scene" for images, for an image never appears alone as in a painting. It attaches to others in a movement that also produces forgetfulness as they replace or condense.

But forgetting implies an effort to remember. Marker strives to recover authentic moments from the dream of social and cultural transformation almost forgotten by history. The third audiovisual letter he writes to his friend refers to Medvedkin's train-cinema project and recalls the importance of the train to Soviet Utopian cinema: "The only film historian who celebrates this adventure is Jay Leyda in *Kino*. In your copy, you underlined the phrases that concern you when you believed that all this was lost and forgotten. And one day in 1971 in Paris, you told us everything". In his book *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, Jay Leyda devoted a portion of a chapter to the film train that survived for two years in the early 1930s. For Leyda, Medvedkin had prominent relevance as head of the

film train: "Without his presence, innovation could not have achieved such memorable results" (LEYDA, 1965, p. 358).

The cinema-train is the figure of authentic utopia to be recovered in *The Last Bolshevik*. To regain it was to start thinking about new modalities for utopia, admissible only in an unknown future and impossible to predict. "Something unique in the history of cinema," says one testimony. Medvedkin's wife remembers: "They even had a cook who prepared them good dishes. And took us with him, my mother and me". Medvedkin himself speaks in some extracts from the interview with Marker: "I can't say that it was easy to set up a movie studio on train cars. But we were young, and it seemed interesting to us to tear the studio off its cement bases and rearm it up in a train car." One witness recalls: "Nothing has been written about all this. The train was important to the country. But in the press its work has not been shown or commented." The cinema-train represented the utopia of transformation in culture, something experienced by several revolutionary filmmakers. With this project, the studio, the apparatus of industrial cinema, was dispensed with. The filmmakers wanted to immerse themselves in reality. Remembering this period of revolutionary culture meant above all not being resigned to the melancholy of assumed defeat.

The patent melancholy in *The Last Bolshevik* not new to leftist culture, but she is distinguished from what we see in *Bronenosets Potyomkin* by Eisenstein. In the fifth letter, *The Last Bolshevik* compares the gesture of the lament at the burial of the sailor Vakoulintchouk's character to that of a woman in the current bustle of the streets. The photogram of the woman's gesture at Eisenstein's seaman's burial was discussed by Roland Barthes, who considered it for its emphasis, a non-polysemic sense "that blurs ambiguity" (BARTHES, 1990, p. 45-61). Georges Didi-Huberman (2012) picks up the scene at its own pace within the montage and can see that Eisenstein's heterodox dialectic reaches from the religious gesture to political action, from pathos to praxis. In Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potyomkin*, the sadness at the seaman's burial unfolds into collective action. In his analysis of this sequence, George Didi-Huberman well understood the dialectic between the emotion of sadness and the bodily action of struggle, the pathos and the praxis in Eisenstein, and countered Barthes's criticism of the scene as "something like a realistic cliché":

(...) from one image to another, lamentation becomes imprecation; everyone's tears become everyone's songs; Religious aberration gives way to the political protests of the passionate woman and the young activist, whose speeches are now understood as "demanding justice". We thus moved from the religious sphere to the political sphere, and it took the effect (the emphasis) of the former to release the counter-effect (the transition to the act) of the latter. (DIDI-HUBERMAN, 2012, p. 18)<sup>5</sup>

The Last Bolshevik seems to be conscious of the difference of the times (Eisenstein's and today's). The future after the fall of the Berlin Wall is no longer the telos, the revolution recognized by the various Marxisms as the purpose of struggle and history. The pathos of grief that Marker assumes is one of defeat so radical that the action cannot yet be circumscribed. The passage to the act does not occur in *The Last Bolshevik*, because in that context it is no longer possible to imagine a telos. It is not, however, resignation. The work of mourning was necessary to remember the times when utopia was an authentic experience. Save the dead who resisted, but also the imagery of the resistance itself. So it wouldn't be enough just to remember Medvedkin's train-cinema almost forgotten by the annals of history if it weren't for Jay Leyda's few pages. It was necessary to announce the recovery made by the young Russian historian Nikolai Izvolov (or Kolia, as his colleagues call him) who participates in *The Last Bolshevik*. The narrator speaks of his own experience when seeing for the first time films that have not seen since the 1930s:

It was not the thrill of an archivist. I was seeing something no one had ever shown. In the 1930s, reality was always artificial, staged and uplifting. Even Vertov had stopped believing in life as it was. And you had filmed the debates between workers, naturally with your good socialist conscience, but never fooling with the images.<sup>6</sup>

6- Transcription of the author of the narrator's speech of the film being analyzed.

In the face of double personal and collective mourning, critical history is realized with the aid of memory: archives with the films of revolutionary filmmakers, but also the testimonies of friends who help locate this authentic moment once imagined and realized by the cinema-train of Medvedkine. The prospect of using archives and sharing testimonials from people living with Medvedkin is therefore not legal. It is not a matter of dealing with the "proofs" of the historical events to be narrated. It is rather the time of loss from the present, including the death of the friend and the huge failure of the left. The timeliness of Perestroika Russia – the context of the end of real socialism and the time to "discover the culprits of so many crimes" – is also the time to topple the idol statues, to destroy the images of those who were until recently the official heroes of Revolution. At the end of the fifth letter we see a statue tumbling in the middle of the night celebrated with fireworks. The day after the stone idol falls, children play in the street by the rubble. We see a statue of Felix Dzerjinski, another of Stalin, and yet another of a smiling male figure. A boy steps on one of the statues. We heard a man express his opinions: "It looks like Caesar. Not one of our leaders. Our leaders never smile. We work day and night to offer them the bonanza of communism". The images of tyrants who have lost their meaning, especially for the thought of utopia, are shown. Also known as Iron Felix, Dzerjinski was a communist revolutionary who fought in the 1905 revolt, the October revolution, and during the Civil War was responsible for the interior security troops. He is regarded as one of the creators of the repressive system that stifled the opposition.

The clash of evidence of the end of utopias does not allow lyricism. The sadness of images recorded in present-day Russia has a tragic dimension. It was not a battle that was lost, but the struggle itself, at least that circumscribed by the predetermined end, the revolution. An intertitle informs the year of events: 1992. In the streets it is not solidarity that prevails in that moment of scarcity, but the petty fight. We see people shouting at each other. Marker's film outlines this tragic melancholy due to the relentless loss of communist utopia. If in the 1960s and 1970s, the death of a revolutionary and the defeat of a battle could follow the wrath of resistance, it is no longer possible to conceive of victory in terms of communism. "It was the end of utopia," recalls the author of the penultimate missive, leaving some ambiguity in completing the sentence: "Not yours, but the very idea of utopia."

In the last and sixth letter, the narrator returns to the film *Happiness* and the recovery of the film made by young historians who testify to the work of two generations. We hear from the narrator: "And another generation, Marina and Kolia, was ready to take the wheel." Between the dinosaur generation, the great revolutionary filmmakers, and the new generation, the changes are enormous. But hope arises precisely in this meeting. Marker ends his film with a poetic image: "Watch what happened to the dinosaurs" says the narrator who shows an image, worthy of contemporary poetry that appropriates daily life by intertwining art and not art: a child embraced by a toy dinosaur. His last sentence: "Children love them."

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Associate Professor at the Institute of Arts of the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), working in undergraduate courses and the Postgraduate Program in Arts (PPGARTES/Uerj). CNPq Productivity Fellow and Uerj/Faperj Procientist. Was coordinator of PPGARTES between 2010 and 2013 and chairman of the PhD course elaboration committee. Was vice president of ANPAP in the 2011-12 biennium. PhD in Communication from the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and Senior Post Doctoral Internship at the Université de Paris 1-Sorbonne. Is a member of the advisory board of UNB's VIS magazine; member of the editorial board of Modos magazine. Published the books *A gravidade da imagem: arte e memória na contemporaneidade* (Quartet, 2014) and *Cinema brasileiro (anos 70-70), dissimetria, oscilação e simulacro* (7 Letras, 2000). Was editor in charge of the collections *Narrativas, ficções, subjetividades* (in partnership with Sheila Cabo Geraldo - Quartet, 2012), *Dispositivos de registros na arte contemporânea* (Contra Capa, 2010). Has been curator of the exhibitions *Tempo-Matéria* (MAC-Niterói, 2010), *Paisagem e extremos* (CCJF, Rio de Janeiro, 2012), *Cidade e desaparecimento* (CCJF, Rio de Janeiro, 2011) and co-curator of the exhibition *Carlos Zilio: paisagens 1974-1978* (Galeria Candido Portinari, UERJ, 2011). Has published in *ARS* (USP), *Arte e Ensaio* (UFRJ), *Poiéisis* (UFF), among others. Currently developing the research *A gravidade da imagem: apropriação e repetição na arte contemporânea* (Poéticas do arquivo).

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