Effects of the First World War on European Cinematic Culture Zviad Dolidze

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Abstract

It is widely known that cinema as a new technical invention (it was not an art field yet) had gained the greatest popularity at the end of the XIX century and the beginning of the XX century, especially in Europe, where several countries like France, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, and Italy had achieved many successes in the film industry and in the film culture too. Meanwhile, Americans attempted to protect the local film market from foreign competitors while preparing to promote their films globally. They began to build vertically integrated structures (production, distribution, and demonstration), which for that period only some European film companies (Pathe, Gaumont, and Nordisk) had. The Americans adopted the block booking system from Denmark and used it at first in the American film market and then in the international film markets.

The onset of the First World War drastically altered the situation. Many European film companies and cinema halls were closed; the market relations between the leading cinematic European countries were destroyed, etc. In the first months of this war, some countries completely halted film production. It was resumed after a time but on a minimal scale. European movie theaters preferred showing one full-length motion picture, preceded by a short war documentary, instead of film programs with several films. Of course, there was a huge need for that. Such practice existed throughout the war. In addition, the number of films of the popular genres was shortened. For example, the Frenchmen minimized the comedies because they believed that there was not a time for laughs. Instead, patriotic-adventure films showed heroic acts on the battlefront or the search for and exposure of enemy spies.