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ment. In North Carolina's manufacturing counties, textile workers joined the mill owners to turn back the mixed-race Populist challenge of the 1890s. Soon after, the state legislature disenfranchised both blacks and illiterate poor whites. The legacy of the planters' power—a one-party South and voting discrimination—lasted until the 1960s.

—James Lang ('78)

**THE POLITICS OF  
SOVIET CINEMA,  
1917–1929**

by Richard Taylor  
Cambridge, 1979  
214 pp. \$19.95

During the 1920s, a group of young Soviet directors, most notably Sergei Eisenstein, made some of the most innovative films the world had yet seen. They used their art as a tool for political indoctrination—extolling the glories of the 1917 Revolution and of the new Soviet way of life—more skillfully than any director before, or perhaps since. British historian Taylor describes this highly creative period that, ironically, stunted the Soviet cinema's future development. Although filmmakers quoted Lenin's endorsement of the medium ("Of all the arts for us the cinema is the most important") *ad nauseam*, and Communist leaders talked a great deal about the propaganda potential of films, the Party failed to supply the young industry with adequate financial and institutional support. Soviet leaders could not decide whether they wanted to raise artistic standards, to use films as a source of revenue, or to exploit the new art form simply as a propaganda tool. Overlapping film agencies competed for meager funds. Most importantly, Taylor writes, the Russian people, as long as they had a choice, preferred entertaining American films to artistically superior, ideologically "correct" Soviet ones. Taylor has performed a valuable service by deflating the image of the early Soviet film industry as a powerful propaganda machine. He is less successful in explaining how and why a group of talented artists suddenly appeared and made lasting contributions to cinema art. But perhaps that is an impossible task.

—Peter Kenez ('80)