

Simon Gutman At Work



This is a picture of me at work, taken in Riga in the 1960s.

The cinema attracted me and my brother. We were known in Dvinsk as the family of Gutman - the former director of Grand Electro - so they let us into the cinema free of charge. Once a mechanic at ?ppolo cinema entrusted me with turning the handle of the manual film projector; his elder brother worked for my father in Grand Electro. Now they don't do it anymore! And there was a problem: when I thought the film was about to finish, I started to turn slowly, and the spectators were indignant! Wow! That's how I let myself down - and I stopped to go to the cinema from that moment on! It was really embarrassing!

In my life I was lucky to see in close up famous stars like Mozhukhin. In the middle of the 1920s the French director Turzansky, a Russian emigrant was shooting a film with Russian actors Mozhukhin and Kovanko. The film was based on the novel by Jules Verne and was called 'Michel Strogoff'. The film was shot in Dvinsk, they thought that the nature was suitable there - Siberian! All the town did nothing except watching how the film was being shot! The Dvinsk garrison of the Latvian army participated in these shootings - they played the Russian army. I took part, too!

There was a Jewish newspaper in Yiddish, a communist newspaper, and I was drawing good caricatures for it. Ulmanis expected the events and declared, that in each house there should be a pair of top-boots and a shirt, as reserves for the army. I remembered that declaration! And I made a caricature, which consisted of two parts. Part one - Ulmanis shows the boots, and part two - the boot of history, the Soviet boot, kicks him out! That caricature didn't survive, but apart from that I have a large number of caricatures at home! Especially from 'The Soviet Latvia'!

I had an attraction for cinema, inherited from my father, and I went to work in film advertising. They gave me photographs, and I made drawings for the ARS company. That company used to show Soviet and American films. I made posters for the Soviet films. The posters without text were

used all over the pre-Baltic countries. Later I gave the originals of my posters to a cinema archive. Simultaneously, I made some additional money as a caricaturist. I signed my pictures Gutman.