In 1968, Fernando Solanas, from Argentina, and Octavio Getino, from Spain, directed *The Hour of the Furnaces*, a documentary film that celebrated violent Latin American revolutionary movements. This selection comes from an essay they wrote for *Tricontinental*, a journal based in Cuba dedicated to creating global solidarity among revolutionary movements.

...Culture, art, science and cinema always respond to conflicting class interests. In the neocolonial situation two concepts of culture, art, science, and cinema compete: that of the rulers and that of the nation. And this situation will continue, as long as the national concept is not identified with that of the rulers, as long as the status of colony or semi-colony continues in force. Moreover, the duality will be overcome and will reach a single and universal category only when the best values of man emerge from proscription to achieve hegemony, when the liberation of man is universal. In the meantime, there exist our culture and their culture, our cinema and their cinema. Because our culture is an impulse towards emancipation, it will remain in existence until emancipation is a reality: a culture of subversion which will carry with it an art, a science, and a cinema of subversion.

The lack of awareness in regard to these dualities generally leads the intellectual to deal with artistic and scientific expressions as they were universally conceived by the classes that rule the world, at best introducing some correction into these expressions. We have not gone deeply enough into developing a revolutionary theater, architecture, medicine, psychology, and cinema; into developing a culture by and for us. The intellectual takes each of these forms of expression as a unit to be corrected from within the expression itself, and not from without, with its own new methods and models.

An astronaut or a Ranger mobilizes all the scientific resources of imperialism. Psychologists, doctors, politicians, sociologists, mathematicians, and even artists are thrown into the study of everything that serves, from the vantage point of different specialties, the preparation of an orbital flight or the massacre of Vietnamese; in the long run, all of these specialties are equally employed to satisfy the needs of imperialism. In Buenos Aires the army eradicates *villas miseria* (urban shanty towns) and in their place puts up “strategic hamlets” with urbanized setups aimed at facilitating military intervention when the time comes. The revolutionary organizations lack specialized fronts in the Establishment’s medicine, engineering, psychology, and art – not to mention the development of our own revolutionary engineering, psychology, art, and cinema… It is evident that revolutionary mass-level culture and awareness can only be achieved after the taking of political power, but it is no less true that the use of scientific and artistic means, together with political-military means, prepares the terrain for the revolution to become reality and facilitates the solution of the problems that will arise with the taking of power...

The anti-imperialist struggle of the peoples of the Third World and of their equivalents inside the imperialist countries constitutes today the axis of the world revolution. *Third cinema* is, in our opinion, the cinema that recognizes in that struggle the most gigantic cultural, scientific, and artistic manifestation of our time, the great possibility of constructing a liberated personality with each people as the starting point – in a word, the decolonization of culture...

The placing of the cinema within US models, even in the formal aspect, in language, leads to the adoption of the ideological forms that gave rise to precisely that language and no other. Even the appropriation of models which appear to be only technical, industrial, scientific, etc., leads to a conceptual dependency situation, due to the fact that the cinema is an industry, but differs from other industries in that it has been created and organized in order to generate certain ideologies. The 35mm camera, 24 frames per second, arc lights, and a commercial place of exhibition for audiences were conceived not to gratuitously transmit
any ideology, but to satisfy, in the first place, the cultural and surplus value needs of a specific ideology, of a specific world-view: that of US financial capital...

The first alternative to this type of cinema, which we could call the first cinema, arose with the so-called ‘author’s cinema’, ‘expression cinema’, ‘nouvelle vague’, ‘cinema novo’, or, conventionally, the second cinema. This alternative signified a step forward inasmuch as it demanded that the filmmaker be free to express himself in non-standard language and inasmuch as it was an attempt at cultural decolonization. But such attempts have already reached, or are about to reach, the outer limits of what the system permits. The second cinema filmmaker has remained “trapped inside the fortress” as Godard put it, or is on his way to becoming trapped. The search for a market of 200,000 moviegoers in Argentina… is a search lacking in viable prospects, unless you consider viable the prospect of becoming institutionalized as ‘the youthful, angry wing of society’ – that is, of neocolonialized or capitalist society.

Real alternatives differing from those offered by the System are only possible if one of two requirements is fulfilled: making films that the System cannot assimilate and which are foreign to its needs, or making films that directly and explicitly set out to fight the System. Neither of these requirements fits within the alternatives that are still offered by the second cinema, but they can be found in the revolutionary opening towards a cinema outside and against the System, in a cinema of liberation: the third cinema.

One of the most effective jobs done by neocolonialism is its cutting off of intellectual sectors, especially artists, from national reality by lining them up behind ‘universal art and models.’ It has been very common for intellectuals and artists to be found at the tail end of popular struggle, when they have not actually taken up positions against it… Popular organizations have very rightly distrusted the ‘intellectual’ and the ‘artist.’ When they have not been openly used by the bourgeois or imperialism, they have certainly been their indirect tools; most of them did not go beyond spouting a policy in favor of “peace and democracy,” fearful of anything that had a national ring to it, afraid of contaminating art with politics and the artists with the revolutionary militant. They thus tended to obscure the inner causes determining neo-colonialized society and placed in the foreground the outer causes, which, while “they are the condition for change, they can never be the basis for change;” in Argentina they replaced the struggle against imperialism and the native oligarchy with the struggle of democracy against fascism, suppressing the fundamental contradiction of a neocolonialized country and replacing it with “a contradiction that was a copy of the world-wide contradiction.”

This cutting off of the intellectual and artistic sectors from the processes of national liberation – which, among other things, helps us to understand the limitations in which these processes have been unfolding – today tends to disappear in the extent that artists and intellectuals are beginning to discover the impossibility of destroying the enemy without first joining in a battle for their common interests. The artist is beginning to feel the insufficiency of his nonconformism and individual rebellion. And the revolutionary organizations, in turn, are discovering the vacuums that the struggle for power creates in the cultural sphere. The problems of filmmaking, the ideological limitations of a filmmaker in a neocolonized country, etc., have thus far constituted objective factors in the lack of attention paid to the cinema by the people’s organizations. Newspapers and other printed matter, posters and wall propaganda, speeches and other verbal forms of information, enlightenment, and politicization are still the main means of communication between the organizations and the vanguard layers of the masses. But the new political positions of some filmmakers and the subsequent appearance of films useful for liberation have permitted certain political vanguards to discover the importance’ of movies. This importance is to be found in the specific meaning of films as a form of communication and because of their particular characteristics, characteristics that allow them to draw audiences of different origins, many of them people who might not respond favorably to the announcement of a political speech. Films offer an effective pretext for gathering an audience, in addition to the ideological message they contain…
In this long war, with the camera as our rifle, we do in fact move into a guerrilla activity. This is why the work of a *film-guerrilla* group is governed by strict disciplinary norms as to both work methods and security. A revolutionary film group is in the same situation as a guerrilla unit: it cannot grow strong without military structures and command concepts. The group exists as a network of complementary responsibilities, as the sum and synthesis of abilities, inasmuch as it operates harmonically with a leadership that centralizes planning work and maintains its continuity…

Guerrilla filmmaking proletarianizes the film worker and breaks down the intellectual aristocracy that the bourgeoisie grants to its followers. In a word, it *democratizes*. The filmmaker’s tie with reality makes him more a part of his people… The revolutionary filmmaker acts with a radically new vision of the role of the producer, teamwork, tools, details, etc. Above all, he supplies himself at all levels in order to produce his films, he equips himself at all levels, he learns how to handle the manifold techniques of his craft. His most valuable possessions are the tools of his trade, which form part and parcel of his need to communicate. The camera is the inexhaustible *expropriator of image-weapons*; the projector, *a gun that can shoot 24 frames per second*…

Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, “Toward a Third Cinema,” *Cinéaste* 4, 3 (Winter 1970-71) 1-10. Article originally written for *Tricontinental*, the journal of the Executive Secretariat of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.