

**An Open Letter to Our Colleagues –
Film and Museum Professionals in Russia and Abroad**

On 27 October 2014, the entire professional staff of the Moscow Cinema Museum – 22 employees, including all curators, archivists and film programmers – delivered to the Minister for Culture of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Medinsky, a letter informing him they resign their posts because of the impossibility of continuing their work under the new leadership of the Museum

On 1 July 2014, the Ministry for Culture chose not to extend the contract of Naum Kleiman, one of the founders of the Moscow Cinema Museum and its director for over 25 years. Instead, a new director was appointed: Larisa Solonitsyna, editor in chief of the newspaper "SK News", the official publication of the Association of Filmmakers of the Russian Federation.

Three months later, the entire scholarly staff of the Museum felt obliged to express their distrust to Larisa Solonitsyna, in a letter to the head of the Department for Cultural Heritage at the Ministry for Culture of the Russian Federation, Mikhail Bryzgalov, and to the Presidential Advisor, Vladimir Tolstoy, calling attention to the lack of competence of the new director and her authoritarian style of leadership that is putting in danger the work of the whole team.

Under the pretext of “making order”, Ms. Solonitsyna began to fire employees in opposition to her, offering them the alternative to “leave their employment for personal reasons.” But for the scholarly staff, representatives of three generations, this museum is not just a job – it is our vocation and life-work.

After our letter of October 27 to the Minister for culture with the explanation of our collective dismissal, the director decided to fire people: among the first five fired employees was Naum Kleiman. The director’s measures of intimidating or persuading to recall our letters of resignation did not make us submit. On the evening of 27 October, the Ministry of Culture, through Interfax Agency, disseminated a text about alleged infractions in the Cinema Museum’s activity, including financial ones, but during the recent ministerial inspection, answers were already given to these unfounded accusations. Why then these matters are being broadcast in media? The purpose is obvious: to discredit the former director of the Museum and his staff.

For the third time in its history, the Cinema Museum is in danger of elimination.

Among numerous answers of solidarity to our appeal, we received an important proposal.

The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, planning to create a cinema department, like in Washington National Gallery of Art, Louvre Museum, Orsay Museum or Centre Pompidou, proposes to make Cinema Museum a part of its structure: a big developing museum association under its aegis, what gives our Museum a possibility to obtain its autonomous building with exhibitions and film programs. We summon our museum colleagues, researchers, filmmakers and film-lovers all over the world to support this initiative.

You can send your comments of support to our addresses:

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Moscow, 31 October 2014

Naum Kleiman and the professional staff of the Cinema Museum