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Cinemateca 2010

# Memories of Underdevelopment 1968

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## Film Notes

More than 40 years after its creation, MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT continues to be regarded as one of the best films produced worldwide. Critics in the fields of Literature and Film Studies continue to demonstrate interest through the publication of scholarly articles. The study of MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT has led critics to develop an interest in subjects such as the following: Gutiérrez Alea's film technique and the complexity of his film, the relationship between aesthetics and politics, subjectivity, memory, reflexivity (metafiction), interior monologue, neorealism, film adaptation, values and contradictions of the bourgeoisie, the controversial notion of "underdevelopment", social classes, intellectuals after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the identity of the Cuban people, and the Cuban sociopolitical situation during the U.S. intervention at the time of the Bay of Pigs invasion and the missile crisis.

MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT is representative of the new Latin American cinema of the 1960s (*Third Cinema*, *New Latin American Cinema*, *Cinema Imperfect*, *Cinema Novo*, "*An Aesthetics of Hunger*"). This cinema grew up, following John King, with optimism fuelled by the Cuban Revolution and the myths and realities of non-revolutionary "developmentalism". The filmmakers and theorists of the movement had little money and were keen to produce films that would discuss crucial problems, promote the active participation of the spectator, and that could be described as historically conscious, critical, capable of contributing to social change, lucid, anti-imperialist, revolutionary, generically hybrid, experimental, handcrafted and, of course, distanced from Hollywood's cinema (see Gutiérrez Alea, John King and Hamid Naficy among others).

MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT is based on the novel by Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes. The action of the film, which

takes place in Havana in 1961 and 1962, is minimal. The central character, played by Sergio Corrieri (1938-2008), is a dilettante bourgeois who lives off rent. Distanced and with an air of superiority, he does not participate or work towards change along with the revolution. The ideological complexity and attraction that the character of Sergio can exert counteracts with what Gutiérrez Alea said towards 1968: "It is through this character, which we tend to reject in almost every way, that we discover new aspects of the reality that surrounds us. Sometimes through him. Other times by contrast with him. His attitude as a spectator with a minimum of lucidity keeps our critical sense awake".

MEMORIES OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT is a "collage", as the director says in the film itself. It is with this inclusion of images of real life that Gutiérrez Alea has left testimony of a complex historical moment. On the other hand, as Caballero says, "the film ends with an image of a besieged Habana", in a "state of expectation" that "has not given a shred until today". It is worth remembering that the U.S. blockade of the island is still in effect after half a century and that it continues to affect all its economic activities.

—Maria Elvira Villamil,  
UNO Department of Foreign  
Languages and Office of Latino and  
Latin American Studies (OLLAS)

## Film Information

### Directed by

Tomás Gutiérrez Alea

### Language

Spanish

### Country

Cuba

### Running Time

97 minutes

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