RESCRIPTING STALINIST MASCULINITY: CONTESTING THE MALE IDEAL IN SOVIET FILM AND SOCIETY, 1953-1968

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ABSTRACT

MARKO DUMANČIĆ: Rescripting Stalinist Masculinity: Contesting the Male Ideal in Soviet Film and Society, 1953-1968
(Under the direction of Dr. Donald J. Raleigh)

This dissertation traces the evolution of a new type of cinematic masculinity in the fifteen years following Joseph Stalin's death and examines how controversial post-Stalinist movie heroes became a battleground for the country's postwar values and ideals. During the 1950s and 1960s, postwar Soviet leadership faced the kinds of sociopolitical ruptures that were also evident on the other side of the Iron Curtain; the Communist Party leadership struggled to moderate the combined destabilizing effect of consumerism, a recalcitrant youth (sub)culture, and Cold War anxieties. Nowhere was the angst of the postwar period more obvious than in the way Soviet filmmakers portrayed their movie heroes. Unlike their hard-bodied and zealous Stalinist counterparts, post-Stalinist protagonists conveyed physical imperfection and ideological ambivalence. Stalin's successor, Nikita Khrushchev initially promoted the turn to more realistic protagonists as part of his de-Stalinization campaign. His inconsistent and unclear policies, however, gave filmmakers the leeway to project a post-Stalinist vision that went beyond Khrushchev's agenda. For a group of the nation's major filmmakers, the struggle to define post-Stalinist masculinity therefore represented a self-conscious mission to discredit the system's reliance on rigid dogma, moral conservatism, and suffocating collectivism. In an ironic twist, reformist filmmakers took advantage of the Soviet

leadership's intention to humanize the Communist system and turned it into a broader conversation about the system's ethical and political principles.

My dissertation demonstrates the indispensability of masculine images to the state's propaganda mission and identifies the processes that governed the production of gendered images within a censorship regime. I also reveal the porousness of Cold War borders by analyzing the momentous effect of American and West European cinema on Soviet filmmakers. Moreover, this research identifies the critical influence "peripheral" East European regimes exercised on the Soviet center. Moscow's aggressive assimilation of so-called satellites ironically allowed Czech and Polish experimental cinematography to act as a conduit for liberal ideals. Overall, the interdisciplinary and transnational approach I employ allows me to go beyond the Cold War flashpoints of the 1950s and 1960s, to reveal a society engaged with the outside world and engrossed in a public renegotiation of its collective identity.

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INTRODUCTION

On March 7, 1963, at the height of the Cold War, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev met with 400 members of the artistic intelligentsia in the Kremlin's Sverdlov Hall. The hot-tempered and unpredictable First Secretary threatened the artistic elites to fall back in line or suffer consequences for challenging the party's monopoly on power. Khrushchev feared that the ideologically unreliable artists—with their abstractionist art, jazz, and subversive poetry—diminished the Communist Party's political and cultural authority by creating an "unofficial" popular (sub)culture. To intimidate his audience, Khrushchev reminded the overflowing hall how brutally the Red Army punished the Hungarian intellectuals responsible for arousing anti-Soviet sentiments during the 1956 uprising in Hungary. In a pique of passion, Khrushchev warned the intelligentsia: "What, you think we forgot how to arrest people?"[1]

During his tirade, Khrushchev reserved his ire for M. M. Khutsiev's 1962 motion picture *Lenin's Guard* (Zastava Il'icha). Khrushchev railed against the young director's production: "The protagonists are not the sort of people our society can rely upon. They are not fighters who will transform the world. They are morally sick people." Khrushchev made it clear that these types of protagonists must not be tolerated since each year the movie industry sold more than three billion tickets. Moreover, Khrushchev insisted that these kinds of heroes were symptomatic of a larger problem; anti-heroism had become a rule rather than

[1] The details of Khrushchev's meeting with the intellectuals on March 7 and March 8, 1963, are available in M. I. Romm's memoirs. See M. Romm, *Kak v kino: Ustnye rasskazy* (Nizhnii Novgorod: DEKOM, 2003).

an exception in Soviet cinematography. Anxious to preserve control over a rapidly changing society, Khrushchev and conservative party officials linked the fallible heroes to social ills: a rebellious youth, a surge in materialistic attitudes, and a rise in antipatriotic, pro-Western sentiment.

Ironically, Khrushchev's diatribe against flawed movie heroes represented the culmination of a process that he himself initiated by denouncing Joseph Stalin's "cult of personality" at the 1956 Twentieth Party Congress. The so-called secret speech Khrushchev delivered at the congress condemned the Great Leader's reign of terror and signaled an overall relaxation of state controls, earning the period the sobriquet "the Thaw." In combating Stalin's authoritarian legacy, Khrushchev emphasized turning away from unrealistic depictions of Soviet realities. He opened the "secret speech" by stating that "it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics, akin to those of a god."[2] A group of liberal filmmakers took advantage of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization rhetoric and began discrediting the hard-bodied and politically zealous movie heroes who embodied Stalinism's main features: terror, despotism, and conformity. These directors replaced Stalinist hypermasculine protagonists with life-size celluloid heroes who conveyed a rejection of Stalinist totalitarian pageantry through physical imperfection and ideological ambiguity.

Heated debates over whether these new post-Stalinist movie heroes adequately represented the superiority of the communist system preoccupied party apparatchiks and dominated censorship reports throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The debates surrounding post-

[2] N. S. Khrushchev, *The Crimes of the Stalin Era: Special Report to the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU* (New York: The New Leader Publishing, 1962), 3.

Stalinist movie heroes concerned the fact that, unlike their muscular and confident Stalinist counterparts, Khrushchev-era heroes came across as "soft" and insecure. The volatility of the domestic situation only increased official angst about the lack of "real heroism" on the silver screen. During the fifties and sixties, the postwar Soviet leadership faced the kinds of sociopolitical fissures that were also evident on the other side of the Iron Curtain; the Communist Party leadership struggled to moderate the combined destabilizing effect of consumerism, a recalcitrant youth (sub)culture, and Cold War anxieties.

Initially, Nikita Khrushchev intended the new kinds of protagonists to signal a decisive retreat from the tyrant's repressive legacy. But the instability Khrushchev's sociopolitical reforms produced soon turned the life-size movie heroes into more than symbols of de-Stalinization. For this reason, my dissertation traces the evolution of a new type of cinematic masculinity in the fifteen years following Stalin's death and examines how the controversial post-Stalinist movie heroes became the battleground for the country's postwar ethos. For a group of the nation's major filmmakers the struggle to define post-Stalinist masculinity in the face of haphazard official interference represented a self-conscious mission to affect the collective social vision. In an ironic twist, what began as the Soviet leadership's intention to humanize the communist system and reinvigorate the ideological commitment of the citizenry to the state soon turned into a much larger conversation about, and contestation of, the system's ethical and political principles.

This dissertation therefore employs masculinity as a lens through which to view and understand post-Stalinist Soviet identity while simultaneously deciphering the very process by which masculinity is manufactured. I seek to demonstrate the centrality of Thaw-era celluloid masculinity to post-Stalinist identity-formation, analyzing how political and cultural

institutions organized and sustained particular visions of masculinity and, by relation, particular visions of Soviet society.

The contestation over celluloid masculinity is particularly significant because of the heterogeneity of views it exposed. Even at the height of the Cold War—heated up by the 1956 uprising in Hungary, the 1961 Berlin Crisis, and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis—candid conversations about the need to reform the Soviet system transpired openly (even if inconsistently) in the course of deliberations about what kind of hero best reflected post-Stalinist ideology. Since neither the most outspoken filmmakers nor the different levels of the bureaucratic apparatus spoke in a unified voice, this dissertation eschews a narrative featuring a liberal intelligentsia battling a conservative bureaucracy. The alternating "thaws" and "freezes" of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization drive made it difficult for any one group to dominate the discussion. The cacophony of views and voices—both on the part of the political and of the artistic authorities—gave the period its distinctive intellectual and aesthetic eclecticism, producing a multiplicity of contesting masculine archetypes in Soviet culture. The influx and broadscale popularity of foreign film heroes further diversified the representations of masculinity, putting the censors on the offensive. The ideologues, for example, saw the heroes of the French *The Three Musketeers* (1961), the American *The Magnificent Seven* (1960), and the Italian *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960) as a direct threat to the stability of the communist (moral) order.

The diversity of film heroes on the Soviet silver screen also mirrored the profound psychological transformation of postwar Soviet society. The state's loosening of coercive penal and bureaucratic mechanisms after 1953 liberated the populace from beneath the state of terror and the siege mentality that had dominated public life since the 1930s. Khrushchev

not only began releasing and rehabilitating innocent citizens from the Gulag in 1954 but also ended the culture of fear in general. Everyday life had also become more open for Soviet citizens in a variety of ways. For instance, in 1956 blue-collar and white-collar workers regained the right to change jobs at will (agricultural workers remained tied to the collective farm).[3] Also, in 1955, after a nineteen-year ban, the government legalized abortion; women could obtain an abortion as freely as had been the case between 1920 and 1936.[4] Lastly, Khrushchev increased the country's interaction with the outside world. Soviet scholars began traveling abroad and residents of larger cities, particularly Muscovites, had opportunities to meet foreigners during heavily attended state-sponsored events. For instance, the 1957 World Youth Festival attracted 34,000 young people from 131 countries to the Soviet capital.

Improved living standards accompanied the liberalization of basic civic freedoms. As a contemporary observer noted: "Even by minimal standards the Soviet citizen in 1953 was still shoddily clad, deplorably housed, poorly equipped in household goods, fed primarily on bread and cereals, and worked forty-eight hours a week."[5] Although not always successful, Khrushchev's reforms aimed to improve the lot of ordinary citizens by enhancing their work conditions, salaries, pensions, public services, housing, and access to consumer goods. By increasing salaries and pensions,[6] decreasing the work week to forty hours, and boosting the

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[3] Mervyn Matthews, *The Passport Society: Controlling Movement in Russia and the USSR* (Oxford, Westview Press, 1993), 32.

[4] Iurii V. Aksiutin, *Khrushchevskaia "Ottepel" i obshchestvennye nastroeniia v SSSR v 1953-1964 gg.* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), 344.

[5] J. Prybyla, "The Soviet Consumer in Khrushchev's Russia," *Russian Review* 20, no. 3 (1961): 194.

[6] According to one contemporary report, money incomes of wage earners and white-collar workers increased by 87 percent from 1953 to 1961 and, according to another report, by 62 percent from 1955 to 1962. See Marshall I. Goldman, "The Reluctant Consumer and Economic Fluctuations in the Soviet Union," *The Journal of Political Economy* 73, no. 4 (1965): 367. These increases are all the more impressive if we consider the fact that by 1952 real wage income, although slightly higher than prewar, was still below that which existed

production of consumer goods, Khrushchev laid the foundations for a consumer society.[7] As Susan Reid succinctly put it: "Not for nothing were the nicknames consumer, refrigerator, and goulash communism given to the new order promised by the Khrushchev leadership and its counterparts in the bloc."[8] More than just a populist maneuver, the state's commitment to raise living standards expressed a domestic and foreign policy mission that eventually became emblematic of the period: "In this stage of the competition, the Soviet Union intends to surpass the United States economically."[9] It is therefore no coincidence that Khrushchev and US Vice President Richard M. Nixon debated the respective merits of the communist and capitalist systems by discussing dishwashers, washing machines, and lawnmowers during the "Kitchen Debate" at the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow. And, despite the fact that the average Soviet worker earned less, spent almost twice as much of his wages on food, and had fewer consumer choices than his Western counterpart, optimism and confidence in a better-stocked tomorrow marked the post-Stalinist period.

It is this optimism about and confidence in the ability of the communist system to provide and care for its citizens that enabled the emergence of a de-Stalinized masculinity. The shift in how filmmakers imagined and produced the quintessential Soviet hero proved

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in 1928, the year before collectivization. See Janet Chapman, "Real Wages in the Soviet Union, 1928-52," *Review of Economics and Statistics* 36, no. 2 (1954): 147.

[7] By 1959, yearly retail sales were almost double the sales of 1952, the last full year under Stalin. In addition to the First All Socialist Advertising Conference held in Prague in 1957 and a nation-wide competition for the best window display in the Soviet Union, the formation of several Soviet Republic Advertising Agencies in late 1958 represented a significant alteration of policy. Not only had there been increased emphasis on billboards and truck-side advertising, but radio and TV commercials began being used. What was regarded as heresy in 1956 was by 1959 considered an important marketing tool. See Marshall I. Goldman, "The Soviet Standard of Living, and Ours," *Foreign Affairs* 38, no. 4 (1960): 626.

[8] Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 2 (2002), 212.

[9] N. S. Khrushchev, *Target Figures for the Economic Development of the Soviet Union* (London: Soviet Booklets, 1959).

historically significant for three distinct but interrelated ways—all of which will be under consideration in the dissertation. First, an examination of cinematic trends that emerged during this fifteen-year period identifies the nature and limits of de-Stalinization. By examining changing representations of the male body and the changing attitude toward its main functions, I underscore an emergence of a new perception of the socialist project's nature and priorities. The post-Stalinist movie industry began revising the vision for the male body thereby raising questions about principles central to the Bolshevik order: the (undisputed) legitimacy of (political) hierarchic authority; the limits of personal agency in a collectivist order; the legitimacy of individual (romantic and heterosexual) desire; and the centrality of a presentist, rather than a historical, perspective in framing individual experiences. Put simply, the new movie heroes charted a social and cultural perspective that advocated legitimizing a male body that was grounded in the present, driven by a dedication to autonomous impulse and activity rather than tradition and obedience, and guided by personal attachments rather than a collective historic mission. Changes in ideas of how the male body ought to look and function led to a vibrant debate on the nature of the socialist order itself—despite conservative efforts to limit the scope and impact of these debates.

Second, contemporary discussions about the archetypal movie hero offer a unique opportunity to understand the process of constructing an image of idealized masculinity. Analysis of the debates surrounding specific heroes and films provides insights into how *and* why certain tropes of masculinity came to dominate movie screens and why others were deliberately excluded during this transitional period in Soviet history. In other words, my study will identify both historically-specific and more general political, economic, and cultural factors that contributed to the creation of post-Stalinist masculinities. In so doing,

this dissertation establishes the roles the masculinity trope plays in defining the socio-political system.

Third, because cinema played a crucial role in reimagining the socialist order it revolutionized the existing Stalinist cine-language. Consequently, I pay particular attention to cinematic strategies filmmakers adopted to present their audiences with a new vision for a post-Stalinist world and a post-Stalinist hero. In other words, my dissertation analyzes how the socio-political agenda shaped (and was, in turn, affected by) the cinematic form. I argue that cinema, perhaps more than any other contemporary art form, gave millions of Soviet viewers a specific perspective or framework through which to examine their daily experiences and analyze the contemporary innovations that facilitated a new way of seeing reality.

An Intelligentsia Resurgent

The emergence of real-life heroes during the 1950s and 1960s was not accidental. In fact, I treat Thaw movie protagonists as a key part of the postwar intelligentsia's de-Stalinization project that featured moral, political, and aesthetic dimensions. The filmmakers who propagated a new masculinity took inspiration from the daily lives of Soviet citizens and successfully attracted millions of moviegoers to their productions. After being inundated with Stalinist supermen living in a sanitized universe, audiences responded enthusiastically to the *cinéma vérité* (cinema of truth) feel of post-Stalinist film. After all, directors' success depended, at least in part, on ticket sales, which unambiguously pointed to the popularity of their heroes. But however much the Soviet everyday served as the primary inspiration for the postwar generation of directors, the historical record makes clear that they ultimately created

movies and protagonists with a specific moral, political, and aesthetic agenda in mind. Consequently, I see the new kind of celluloid heroism as a self-conscious project aimed at securing the self-identified reformist section of the intelligentsia with the cultural currency to shape national priorities and public discourse.

The group of filmmakers who wanted to assert their own vision of a post-Stalinist order did not act alone; the movie industry was part of a larger effort to de-Stalinize Soviet society. The artistic community—poets, writers, painters, sculptors, composers, musicians, theater directors, actors, and composers—organized loosely around a commitment to liberate national culture from Stalinist conservative dogmatism. In many ways this was a tightly interconnected ecosystem; literature inspired theater plays, motion pictures popularized obscure novels, and works of fiction served as a basis for movie scripts. It is therefore impossible to consider directors and their films apart from the wider cultural context. For instance, B. A. Slutskii's era-defining poem *Physicists and Poets* popularized a 1959 newspaper debate over whether science/objectivity or the arts/emotions were more important to the quality of human existence. M. Romm's 1962 blockbuster film about nuclear physicists perpetuated the spirit evident in both the public debate and the oft-recited poem. This type of creative cross-fertilization was also a product of close personal contacts Soviet intellectuals had with one another. Echoing the spirit of literary salons of the nineteenth century, the living rooms and kitchens in Khrushchev-era prefabricated high-rises drew both established and promising talent to debate the day's most pressing issues.

Naturally, neither the movie industry nor the artistic intelligentsia responded to de-Stalinization with unanimity. As a political or social category, the intelligentsia comprised men and women of different educational levels, life experiences, economic strata, and age

groups. Even the artists and intellectuals who supported Khrushchev's reformist agenda did not always see eye-to-eye about either the nature of the reforms or how best to partake of the political changes occurring in the country. These caveats notwithstanding, I argue that there existed a discernible core group of artists and filmmakers who shaped the broad outlines of the de-Stalinization drive. It is this group of filmmakers—whom I loosely refer to as liberal or reformist—that is the focus of my research. Despite the fact that the number of filmmakers who promoted a reformist agenda was smaller than those who continued to march to the beat of the party's drum, this cohort consistently challenged the limits placed on their freedom of expression. As a consequence, these filmmakers' controversial motion pictures received ample attention in newspapers, closed-door party discussions, and specialized journals. Thus my dissertation identifies films that represent a larger cinematic opus, which, taken as a whole, served as a vital site of contestation, a battleground for defining post-Stalinist values.

It is important to note that even filmmakers who received censure for their ideological irreverence believed in the value and functionality of the communist system; their work aimed to optimize, not discredit, the existing structures. Capturing the youthful spirit and demographic structure of the country,[10] this group of filmmakers founded their work on the premise that the socialist system could evolve from Stalinist tyranny to the Marxist utopia; they envisioned a society defined by both total economic equality and individual liberty. In this sense, these directors' motion pictures reflected and influenced the spirit of a generation. The generation that had by 1960 acquired the appellation *shestidesiatniki* (literally, the people of the sixties) was defined by Khrushchev's reforms: the relaxation of civil liberties, the increase of living standards, a rise of a consumer culture, and an openness to the outside

[10] In 1960 approximately 55 percent of the population was under thirty years of age and the fifteen to twenty-nine age bracket comprised just over a quarter of the population. See Iu. A. Poliakov ed., *Naselenie Rossii v XX veke: Istoricheskie ocherki, 1960-1979*, vol. 3 (Moscow: Rosspen, 2005), 11-12.

world.[11] The catchwords for the period—sincerity, internationalism, and humanism—became central to the identity of the *shestidesiatniki* or the so-called children of the Twentieth Party Congress.

Arguing that intellectual circles played a seminal role in forming the mentality of the *shestidesiatniki*, Vladislav Zubok states that, by the time the sixties began, "a small but growing number of educated Russians began to develop a common self-awareness, distinct from that of a Soviet mainstream."[12] This cohort of university educated men and women of sweeping erudition defined itself against the established Soviet cultural elites, whom they considered to be their negative "other." Unlike the "official/professional intellectuals," who continued performing a subservient role vis-à-vis the state as they had under Stalin, the new ranks of philosophers, performers, artists, sociologists, scientists, and journalists desired to recapture the moral and spiritual role the intelligentsia possessed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Consciously modeling their identity on the values of their spiritual predecessors, the 1950s and 1960s generation of intellectuals felt it their duty to serve a universal humanist ideal rather than blindly propagate government-sponsored ideology.

This group of artists and academics exercised unprecedented popular influence during the period. Unlike the sixties movements in the US, which the youth itself commanded, the

[11] Literary critic S. B. Rassadin popularized the term in his article discussing the new generation of Soviet writers in the December 1960 issue of the journal *Iunost'*. Another literary critic, F. F. Kuznetsov referred to this same cohort of writers as "the fourth generation." See F. Kuznetsov, "Chetvertoe pokolenie," *Literaturnaia gazeta* July 27, 1961, 3.

[12] Vladimir Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 161.

Soviet struggle to liberalize their society came primarily from intellectual elites.[13] Supported and encouraged by Khrushchev's liberalization, this generation of poets, writers, performers, and filmmakers created a subculture that captured the imagination of the general populace. Communist Party officials fretted about the influence the creative intelligentsia wielded among ordinary citizens. For instance, in 1955, Anastas Mikoyan, a Khrushchev supporter and member of the Politburo, recalls seeing a crowd blocking access to his limousine. Upon asking why the throng had assembled, he received a one word answer: "Evtushenko." Not familiar with the last name of the bard who had already become immensely popular with the Soviet public, he asked who the young man was. Upon hearing that Evtushenko was a poet, Mikoyan concluded: "I saw people queuing up for poetry, not food. I realized that a new era had begun."[14] Indeed, in the same way that tens of millions of moviegoers flocked to movie theaters to watch a fresh and unvarnished take on their daily lives, poets drew thousands to their readings in halls, schools, city squares, and stadiums. These uninhibited displays of emotion helped to foster the reawakening of a national conscience that Stalin had silenced.

The reformist circle of the intelligentsia that garnered such an unprecedented popular following comprised an eclectic mix of men and women from all walks of life and all parts of the Soviet Union. Even though their work helped to define a particular generation, the liberal intelligentsia itself was a mélange of age cohorts and did not consist exclusively (or even predominantly) of the *shestidesiatniki* generation. The older guard not only protected their protégées from political dangers, but also served as a crucial link to the youth's

[13] B. Iu. Kagarlitsky notes that "there were a lot of young people involved in the Soviet 1960s as well. But it was not at all a youth movement in style. The movement was essentially elitist. The 'best minds' spoke and the rest listened. The struggle for free speech did not presuppose dialogue. The 'forward thinkers' were supposed to take the podium." See B. Kagarlitsky, "1960s East and West: The Nature of the *Shestidesiatniki* and the New Left," *boundary 2* 36, no. 1 (2009): 99.

[14] Zubok, *Zhivago's Children*, 59.

prerevolutionary and revolutionary heritage. The up-and-coming talent, in turn, provided their mentors with new insights, fresh themes, and a novel perspective. The cross-generational interchange lent the cultural scene a vibrancy and innovativeness not witnessed in the USSR since the 1920s.

The fruitfulness of such intergenerational interactions was particularly evident among filmmakers, whose community was even tighter knit than those of other artists. For instance, three of the day's most prominent and controversial directors—M. I. Romm, G. N. Chukhrai, and M. M. Khutsiev—individually and jointly helped define the basic outlines of the post-Stalinist cinematography. Born in 1901, Romm participated in the Bolshevik Revolution, the Civil War, and World War Two. The seminal events in Soviet history punctuated Romm's biography to the same extent his oeuvre defined the nation's cinematography and culture. In fact, Romm won five Stalin Prizes between 1941 and 1951.[15] His Stalin Prizes notwithstanding, Romm went on to exert incomparable influence on Thaw cinematography by training a new generation of first-class filmmakers.[16]

One of Romm's most renowned protégées was G. N. Chukhrai. Like Romm, Chukhrai grew up under Stalin, his first vivid memories being of the collectivization drive in Ukraine. Born in 1921, Chukhrai was thirty-two when the Great Leader died and had an accurate image of Stalinist oppression. However, it was his wartime experiences that figured

[15] Because Romm's productions unambiguously supported the Stalinist agenda, nearly every film Romm produced between 1941 and 1951 received the highest state accolades and Stalin's personal sympathies. His two Lenin biopics—*Lenin in October* (Lenin v Oktiabre, 1937) and *Lenin in 1918* (Lenin v 1918 godu, 1939)—won official recognition because they not only explicitly portrayed Stalin as Lenin's direct successor but also because they aggrandized Stalin's contribution to the revolutionary effort. Moreover, these two movies set the standard for subsequent motion pictures that exaggerated (read: fabricated) Stalin's military accomplishments during the October Revolution, Civil War, and Second World War. The three anti-American propaganda movies Romm completed also defined the genre of Cold War propaganda. *Girl No. 217* (Chelovek No. 217, 1944), *The Russian Question* (Russkii vopros, 1947), and *Secret Mission* (Sekretnaia missiia, 1950) attained blockbuster status and critical acclaim from the regime.

[16] His most famous and talented students include: A. A. Tarkovskii, V. M. Shukshin, R. D. Chkheidze, G.N. Daneliia, G. A. Panfilov, V. P. Basov, A. N. Mitta, T. E. Abuladze, and I. V. Talankin.

most prominently in his personal outlook and served as the main inspiration during his career.[17] As his wartime memoir makes clear, his time at the front allowed him to distance himself from Stalinist propaganda. For instance, he rejected the Stalin-era interpretation of what constituted heroism: "The guy who was lucky enough to destroy a tank and get featured in the newspaper is no more of a hero than the unlucky fellow who died trying to do the same."[18] Chukhrai's movies about ordinary but honest and likeable soldiers affected the ethos of the long 1960s in the way Romm's films influenced the 1940s and 1950s. It is no surprise then that his meteoric rise closely paralleled the de-Stalinization of Soviet political and artistic life.

Four years Chukhrai's junior, Khutsiev lived through the horrors of the war but did not participate in it, finishing his directorial degree in 1950. Having lost his father to the 1937 Great Purge, Khutsiev adopted a much more critical attitude toward authority. Unlike Romm or Chukhrai, Khutsiev had far less personal attachment to the Soviet state. And although Khutsiev openly admitted that he thought highly of some Stalinist blockbusters, he challenged the basic tenets of socialist realism in all of his films. At the start of his career Khutsiev made a statement that would become his life-long creative manifesto: "Even though we have been spoon-fed images of a varnished reality, today the camera is leaving the thoroughfares and entering side-streets and courtyards filled with trash, junk, and half-dressed men." If Romm and Chukhrai were able to push through their more controversial films because of their (wartime) service to the state, Khutsiev was not so fortunate. The authorities viewed the young director and the majority of his films with suspicion. Had it not

[17] Chukhrai attributed so much significance to his wartime experiences that he penned a memoir focusing solely on this period in his life. In the memoir Chukhrai states: "All of my movies have, in some measure, been based on my own experiences at the front." See G. Chukhrai, *Moia voina* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2001), 271.

[18] Ibid., 103.

been for the support of figures of Romm's and Chukhrai's stature, it is likely that younger directors such as Khutsiev would have had all their work shelved. Instead, the older generation's political and cultural capital ensured that Khutsiev's generation's voices were heard.

While the shared humanist ideas about universal justice solidified this cross-generational collaboration, it was the relative similarity of the directors' aesthetic philosophy and style that gave post-Stalinist cinematography a distinct character. The new attitude toward moviemaking came as much from new kinds of plots and dialogues as it did from the way filmmakers filmed their heroes. Although in a more understated way, the new generation of Soviet directors participated in a cathartic and regenerative trend in European film history. Like their European colleagues, who aimed to revolutionize their conservative national film industry throughout the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, Soviet reformist filmmakers fought the ossified practices characteristic of Stalinist cinema. Since they chose the term "sincerity" as their guiding principle and rejected the pomp and circumstance typical of Stalinist productions, reformist Thaw-era directors approached their craft in ways similar to directors in Italy, France, and the United Kingdom.

In all three West European countries a group of youthful and rebellious filmmakers declared war on big commercial studio productions. Postwar Italian directors criticized domestic "white telephone cinema" (*cinema dei telefoni bianchi*[19]) that imitated Hollywood films of the 1930s; young French filmmakers mocked the old-fashioned *cinéma de papa*, or "Dad's cinema" throughout the 1950s; and in the same period the up-and-coming British moviemakers ridiculed English film for being "snobbish, anti-intelligent, emotionally

[19] These films usually featured elaborate Art Deco sets with white telephones as the ultimate status symbol of bourgeois wealth.

inhibited, willfully blind to the conditions and problems of the present, and dedicated to an out-of-date, exhausted national ideal."[20] Following the lead of Italian neorealists, who continued to affect European and Soviet cinematography long after the movement's zenith in the late 1940s, postwar directors across Europe forsook elaborate sets and the trappings of studio productions, focusing instead on the tragic beauty of the everyday, paying particular attention to the rigors and suffering evident in daily life. Perhaps more importantly, these directors chipped away at the pillars of interwar society: respect for family, official authority, class hierarchy, and national pride.[21]

Aesthetically, post-Stalinist motion pictures—as well the New Waves that emerged in Britain, France, Poland and Czechoslovakia—were visibly influenced by Italian neorealism. The Italian movement exercised a strong influence on the movie industry after 1953 in no small part due to the fact that the neorealist directors' aim to discredit glitzy Fascist aesthetics echoed efforts of Soviet filmmakers to invalidate Stalinist pageantry.[22] Vittorio De Sica, the leading figure of Italian neorealism, declared that the movement had been born out of: "an overwhelming desire to throw out of the window the old stories of the Italian cinema, to place the camera into the mainstream of real life."[23] To capture "real life" as it happened,

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[20] This is how prominent film critic and director Lindsay Anderson reflected on the state of the English film industry in 1957. See Tom Maschler, *Declaration* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), 139.

[21] These three postwar film movements gathered initially around cinema journals that featured seminal works of criticism that broke with tradition and called for new approaches to cinema. In Italy, film journals *Cinema* and *Black & White* (Bianco e Nero) served as the main outlet for future neorealist directors, such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Luchino Visconti, and Giuseppe De Santis. *Sight and Sound* became a platform for the founders of the British New Wave: Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson. Similarly, *Cahiers du Cinema* provided a jumping-off point for the French New Wave directors to advance an agenda lambasting the big postwar production films of the so-called quality films (*cinéma de qualité*).

[22] The fact that the majority of neorealist filmmakers associated closely with the Italian Communist Party and Socialist Party also secured them political legitimacy in the USSR.

[23] Quoted in Mira Liehm, *Passion and Defiance: Film in Italy from 1942 to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 59.

neorealists adopted a set of specific filmmaking procedures, routines, and practices: "a preference for location filming, the use of nonprofessional actors, the avoidance of ornamental mise-en-scène, a preference for natural light, a freely-moving documentary style of photography."[24] Despite their focus on ordinary people and their everyday existence, Soviet filmmakers had to defend their new aesthetics tooth and nail against charges of pessimism and even "slandering Soviet reality."

Official reprobation notwithstanding, reformist filmmakers continued participating in European cinematic trends because the country's national repository of domestic and foreign film (Gosfil'mofond) enjoyed an active cooperation with similar agencies abroad and thus offered Soviet directors an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the latest international productions. In many instances, Gosfil'mofond ensured that young Thaw directors receive the necessary background in foreign cinematography. Noted Thaw-era director, A. Mitta, recalled: "During the 1950s, when no one could watch any foreign films, Gosfil'mofond gave us, the students of the Cinematography Institute, the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the masterpieces of world cinema."[25] Moreover, the government's dedication to a policy of "peaceful coexistence" with the West facilitated an active cultural exchange in all realms of artistic activity. A 1965 Cinematographers' Union report on the association's cooperation with international delegations in 1964 illustrated a vibrant visitors program. Over the course of 1964, 236 members of the Soviet cinematographers' union went abroad to visit other movie studios, international film festivals, and professional conferences. Significantly, 136 of the total visited capitalist countries while 100 went to socialist countries. During that

[24] Mark Shiel, *Italian Neorealism: Rebuilding the Cinematic City* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006), 2.

[25] For a more detailed account of *Gosfil'mofond's* activities during the Thaw years see V. S. Malyshev, *Gosfil'mofond: Zemlianichnaia poliana* (Moscow: Pashkov Dom, 2005), 107-52.

same year the union welcomed 27 delegates from West Europe, including the U.K. Italy, West Germany, and France.[26]

This dynamic cultural interchange also exposed Soviet filmmakers to experimental New Wave trends, then apparent in British, Czechoslovak, and Polish cinematography. In some ways, the New Wave techniques continued the neorealist tradition of filmic experimentation—rejection of standard narrative forms, editing practices, and filming styles. The embracement of the New Wave, however, proved even more controversial since conservative intellectual circles saw the New Wave aesthetics as an unambiguous de-politicization of socialist art. If the classic neorealist approach could be defended because it focused on the working class and was based on leftists politics, the New Wave styles of cinematography were much more vulnerable to charges of ideological deviationism and bourgeois extravagance. The New Wave aesthetics challenged the official socialist realist tradition, which demanded that works of art glorify the proletariat's struggle toward socialist progress. Instead of imbuing the exploits of ordinary workers with a sense of historic importance, the Soviet New Wave directors focused on their heroes' disjointed stream of consciousness and their angst-ridden attempts to make sense of their place in the world. Party ideologues bitterly complained that the New Wave aesthetic ran contrary to the system's fundamental belief in Marx's deterministic view of the world.

Despite political risks, the *shestidesiatniki* directors consciously fought official pressures for two reasons. First, they believed that their civic mission could not be accomplished without the right to express themselves freely. Their defense of the New Wave approach thus symbolized a determination to voice their opinions in defiance of specious

[26] For the full report see Rossiiskii Gosudarstvenyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii, hereafter RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 142, ll. 96-117.

accusations of antipatriotic sedition. Second, they felt themselves an integral part of an international intellectual community and wanted their films to speak not only to domestic audiences but also to win global recognition. In other words, they strove to both improve the change domestic politics and contribute to a universal cultural heritage.

As embodiments of the reformist intelligentsia's internationalist outlook and humanist ideals, the male film heroes of the fifties and sixties became the "poster boys" for a larger cultural, political, and moral agenda. Consequently, the fate of these protagonists was inseparably tied to the fate of the liberal intelligentsia's project to de-Stalinize the Soviet polity. The way party officials reacted to these movie heroes reflected the anxiety the governing establishment felt about the changing mood in the country. Although the powers that be succeeded in suppressing both the resurgent intelligentsia and their reformist agenda, they failed to secure the sixties' generation's political allegiance. Without the support of the poets, actors, directors, scientist, and writers whom the *shestidesiatniki* admired and identified with, the regime squandered an opportunity to forge a common language with a cohort that would prove central in the fateful days of *perestroika* two decades later.

Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

Scholars across the disciplines have utilized gender as an analytical category within the past twenty years with great success. Joan W. Scott's pathbreaking article "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," defines gender as a social category imposed on a sexed body. My work is grounded in Scott's claim that gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power since it is a constitutive element of social relations, based on the socially constructed differences between the sexes. An examination of the ways in which the

Soviet state wanted to affect social relationships to boost its authority is crucial to an understanding of how states in general manipulate masculine and feminine ideals to mobilize citizens and galvanize popular support.

Scholars from a range of disciplines have successfully adopted gender as the focus of their studies, producing research that illuminates larger social processes in which the masculine body is either a site of contention or an active sociopolitical force. Both the male body and the rituals that impart onto the male body its symbolic masculine status are vital components of sociopolitical trends in various historical and geographic settings as the examples that follow demonstrate. Dorothy L. Hodgson, for example, has analyzed how modernity has affected the production of Maasai masculinities in Tanzania.[27] Her ethnohistorical study shows that modernity is never a totalizing process, but that local Maasai men performed their masculinity so as to appropriate, reshape, and even transcend the contradictory structures imposed by colonial modernist interventions. Julie Peteet's work on male gender and rituals of resistance in the Palestinian Intifada also illustrates how men use their masculinity to challenge and subvert projected cultural forms and social functions.[28] In her study, physical violence, which Israelis intended to signify the inferiority of the subject male population, paradoxically becomes "constitutive of a resistant subjectivity that signals heroism, manhood, and access to leadership and authority."[29] Dorinda Outram's work also places the male body—but this time a fictional one—at the center of nation-state formation in

[27] Dorothy Louise Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

[28] Julie Peteet, "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence," in eds. Mai Ghoussoub and Emma Sinclair-Webb, *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East* (London: Saqi Books, 2000).

[29] Ibid., 122.

the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution.[30] Outram details the process by which the revolution was led by a male bourgeois political class, whose physical ideal was one of bodily restraint and passive stoicism in the face of death. She argues that this middle-class male ideal symbolically and literally silenced other forms of bodily expression—those of women and of the lower class orders—to ultimately produce weakened and restrictive models for political change.

I argue that Khrushchev's de-Stalinization was equally as revolutionary in its implications and that the construction of new masculine ideals played a central role in shaping the state's political capital. Unlike French middle-class men, however, Soviet authorities battled a multiplication rather than a marginalization of masculine norms, the multiplicity of which hindered the Communist Party's ability to present the populace with a universal and uniform model of appropriate social standards. Like Maasai and Palestinian bodies, the male Soviet body became a contested site where the struggle for political authority played itself out. While the post-Stalinist authorities attempted to create a new kind of hegemonic masculine ideal that would showcase a standardized set of values, the reformist intelligentsia aimed to display a masculinity that encouraged critical thought and independent action. As the above scholars have shown, an understanding of how gender operates as a factor of sociopolitical change is essential to identifying how states and political systems ensure popular support and legitimacy.

The theoretical concept of hegemonic masculinity is central to my analysis of how masculinity operates in the symbolic/visual realm to affect socio-political realities. Hegemonic masculinity became a dominant concept in social science research on gender

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[30] Dorinda Outram, *The Body And The French Revolution: Sex, Class And Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

relations by the mid-1980s because it allowed for more nuanced approaches to intermale and intergender dynamics.[31] The emergence of this concept is tied to the 1970s women's and gay liberation movements, which provided the fields of sociology and social psychology with the impetus to begin problematizing the role of men within a patriarchal order. Particularly influential were the works of Maxine Baca Zinn, Angela Davis, and bell hooks, who insisted that power not be conceptualized solely in terms of sex difference and thus set the foundation for questioning any universalizing claims about the category of man.[32] By the late 1970s, Australian sociologist R. Connell applied A. Gramsci's idea of (class) hegemony to gender relations. Connell approached the study of masculinity by arguing that the relationships *within* genders are centered on, and can be explained by, the relationships *between* genders.[33] Patriarchy therefore does not only signify the *domination* of men *over* women, but is also built around the *interrelation between* different types of masculinity.[34] Patriarchy operates by subjugating both genders to a flexible and changing cultural ideal embodied in the idea of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity marginalizes certain types of masculinity

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[31] The concept of hegemonic masculinity effectively displaces the sex-role theory that held sway in gender research up until that time. The essential problem with sex role theory is that it conceptualizes gender as two complementary categories that are the result of socialization processes. In other words, the sex-role theory does not account for the complexities of power relations within genders and, as such, is ill-equipped to theorize any changes in gender dynamics that are not the direct result of macro socio-political processes. As R. Connell states: "change is always something that happens to sex roles, that impinges on them. It comes from outside, from society at large, as in discussions of how technological and economic changes demand a shift to a modern male role. Sex role theory has no way of grasping change as a dialectic arising within gender relations themselves." See Robert W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics* (Sydney: Allen and Uwin, 1987), 53.

[32] M. Baca Zinn, "Chicano Men and Masculinity," *Journal of Ethnic Studies* 10, no. 2 (1982): 29-44; A. Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Vintage, 1983); and b. hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston: South End, 1984).

[33] Connell, *Gender and Power*, 183-88.

[34] Although Connell's research is focused on masculinities, it is driven by a feminist agenda since he argues that studying intergender relationships is crucial for a better perception of intragender relationships. Put simply, the goal of analyzing hegemonic masculinity's effect on other strands of masculinity is to elucidate the effects of intragender relations on the reproduction of the (patriarchal) relationships between genders.

because they impede or endanger the domination of women. For instance, homosexual masculinity is excluded because it undermines the institution of heterosexuality, which is central to the reproduction of patriarchy.

Hegemonic masculinity consequently signifies a cultural and ideological standard rather than an actual dominant social group. Political, social, and cultural institutions promote this constructed ideal through the production and dissemination of archetypal masculine tropes that reproduce and affirm the patriarchal status quo. Through this process hegemonic masculinity affects not only women's relationships to men and vice versa but also regulates relations between men, requiring all men to position themselves in relation to the hegemonic paradigm. The function of hegemonic masculinity is to legitimize the global domination of both women as well as marginalized, subordinated, and complicit masculinities that weaken patriarchal authority over women.[35] Adaptability to historic and locational contexts allows hegemonic masculinity to consistently enforce the prerogatives of a patriarchal system between and among genders.[36] And since masculinities are not fixed, biologically-determined entities exclusive to the male body but rather represent a "configuration of practices," hegemonic masculinity acts as the guide to action, actively constructing and extolling certain masculine tropes while marginalizing others. This point

[35] Connell here distinguishes between subordinated, marginalized and complicit masculinities. He explains: "These include subordinated masculinities, the most important example of which in contemporary European/American culture is gay masculinity. There are also marginalized masculinities, gender forms produced in exploited or oppressed groups such as ethnic minorities, which may share many features with hegemonic masculinity but are socially de-authorized. There are also masculinities that are organized around acceptance of the patriarchal dividend, but are not militant in defense of patriarchy. These might be termed complicit masculinities." See R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 30.

[36] This was also relevant politically since this view allowed for the hope that the gender order will not continue reproducing a gender hierarchy but will, in future incarnations, allow for a democratization of relations within and between gender categories.

becomes especially relevant since hegemonic masculinity represents a multivalent ideal that is as unnatural as it is constructed and thus impossible to realize in practice.

Although scholars who follow Connell's intellectual agenda have identified and documented the performative and adaptive nature of hegemonic masculinity, the theory of hegemonic masculinity relegates non-hegemonic (working class, black, homosexual, and physically disabled) masculinities to the social and cultural margins. Taking into consideration A. Gramsci's understanding of internal hegemony, D. Z. Demetriou questions whether hegemonic masculinity is, in fact, "a closed and unified totality that incorporates no otherness." Demetriou argues that nonhegemonic masculinities are integral (rather than marginal) to the formative process of hegemonic masculinity. For this reason, Demetriou talks about a "masculine bloc," which is a term that implies "constant appropriation of diverse elements from various masculinities that makes the hegemonic bloc capable of reconfiguring itself and adapting to the specificities of new historical conjunctures."[37] The masculine hegemonic bloc operates on the principle of *negotiation* rather than *negation* in order to preserve its dominance over the female gender and non-hegemonic masculinities.

Since the early 1990s in particular, film studies—and especially researchers who employ a psychoanalytic approach to analyze gender dynamics—have produced novel ideas about masculinity that parallel Demetriou's conclusions. The new approach in film studies focuses on deviant and marginalized masculinities—masculinities that not only acknowledge but welcome castration, alterity, and specularity. This perspective complicates Laura Mulvey's theory that cinema inevitably places the spectator in a masculine subject position while positioning the celluloid heroine as the spectator's object of desire. The "to-be-looked-

[37] Demetrakis Z. Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theory and Society* 30, no. 3 (June 2001): 348.

at-ness" ceases to be the exclusive property of the female protagonist and can be applied with equal success to marginalized, deviant, and even hegemonic masculinities.[38] Kaja Silverman, whose work examines alternative, non-hegemonic masculinities in relation to the feminine, posits that duplicity and multiplicity exist automatically in every subject and object, thus making it clear that representations of both male and female subjectivities imply their own negations and contradictions.

My own research taps into this theoretical approach to hegemonic masculinity by examining how post-Stalinist marginalized masculinities, as well as femininities, transformed Stalinist hegemonic masculinity. Khrushchev's resolve to de-Stalinize Soviet politics and culture prompted an emergence of masculinity tropes that played marginal or subordinate roles in the Stalinist (symbolic) order. Directors turned to neorealist documentary-style filmmaking and attached the humanization of their "average" heroes to the administration's drive to discredit the pageantry of Stalinist culture. The changes in hegemonic masculinity essentially represented the acknowledgment on the part of both moviemakers and authorities that the Soviet milieu had changed radically since Stalin's death and captured its dynamic evolution.

The post-Stalinist hegemonic ideal, if it was going to be effective, had to adjust to new circumstances in order to remain an efficient tool of social and political control. Frequent discussions of women's social roles, the propagation of a Soviet-style consumer

[38] Since Laura Mulvey's 1975 groundbreaking essay "Visual Narrative and Narrative Film," film scholars have most often drawn on feminist theory and relied on psychoanalytic and semiotic methodology to analyze celluloid masculinity. In the past two decades research on representations of gender roles in film has productively problematized theoretical approaches to understanding the mechanisms that control the gendered order in film. Through an interdisciplinary use of feminist, queer, and post-colonial theories, the work of Pam Cook, Linda Ruth Williams, Richard Dyer, Peter Lehman, and Kaya Silverman, among others, has gone beyond Mulvey's theories which equated the masculinity of the male subject with activity, voyeurism, sadism, fetishism, and narrative and associated the femininity of the female subject with passivity, exhibitionism, masochism, narcissism, and spectacle.

culture, the vibrant and vocal youth culture, and the growing influence of foreign cultural influences all compelled a revision of the former hegemonic ideal. The period's dynamic sociopolitical processes allowed filmmakers to use the male body as both a reflection of the changes occurring in Soviet society and as a tool to privilege a particular vision of the post-Stalinist order. In this sense cine-masculinity not only reflected its context but also actively shaped it. Specifically, cinema's increasing attention to unorthodox youth heroes, the premium placed on emotion and personal life, and the demilitarization and deideologization of daily rhetoric and outlook threatened to undermine the principles underlying the political and moral authority of the Communist Party, which had been founded on principles of hierarchical seniority, personal sacrifice, and political consciousness.

The frustration accompanying the revision of the Stalinist hegemonic masculine ideal was so acute because it was part and parcel of authenticating and legitimizing the post-Stalinist political order and those who were in charge of it. Those in power feared that an unhindered focus on young, self-reflective, introverted, and sensitive heroes would both undercut the sense of historic mission among Soviet viewers and bring into question the ability of the party to arbiter and manage the lives of its citizens through ideological dogma alone. In other words, those criticizing the revision of Stalinist hegemonic masculinity were anxious that post-Stalinist masculinity weakened the Soviet ideological ur-myth, which imagined the New Soviet man as a fighter engaged in a class struggle to achieve communism under the incontestable guidance of the party. The post-Stalinist heroes stressed emotion and the individuality of human existence and as such questioned the ideological leadership of men who based their power on advocating a collective and historic mission.

The anxiety surrounding the question of archetypal masculine identity finds reflection in the sources under investigation in this study: audience responses in transcriptions of discussions following public film showings, in popular and professional movie journals, and in reports from studio and party committees deciding on whether to release particular films to a national audience. The sources I use help me understand how two groups—filmmakers and party officials—shaped the debate on the nature of post-Stalinist masculinity, and, by extension, post-Stalinist values. Although my study focuses on the reformist cinematographers and how they, as a collective, shaped the public debate on masculinity, I consider the actions of the party apparatus as an indispensable part of this story. In this way, I am able to outline the logic of the two major groups that dictated the contours of celluloid masculine identity.

I draw on a wide range of sources—recently declassified censorship records, archived meetings of the cinematographers' union, published movie reviews, and memoirs/biographies of individuals affiliated with the movie industry—in order to establish the evolution of the new cinematic perspective that gave rise to a uniquely post-Stalinist masculinity. An examination of these diverse sources allowed me to determine the most controversial and illuminating motion pictures to investigate. Out of the total number of movies produced during this period, I viewed eighty that have contemporary Soviet life as their focus. I ultimately selected twenty of them to incorporate into my analysis. These twenty merit particular focus since they attracted the most attention from art critics, political authorities, and audiences. In other words, the debates that emerged as a result of this set of twenty motion pictures compellingly illustrate the sociopolitical fault lines created by de-Stalinization and also serve as an invaluable testimony to both the moviemakers' efforts to

broaden and liberalize the political perspective and the authorities' determination to control the scope of de-Stalinization.

I use memoirs and archival documents to understand the contextual factors behind the making of particular movies. Through this approach, I show that even though ideology played a key role in film production, finances and backroom political maneuverings often decided the fate of a film and its hero. Understanding the particularities of the moviemaking process enables me to interpret how censors, moviemakers, and politicians negotiated the release of controversial heroes. At the same time, I read movies as cultural text, establishing dominant visual symbols and narrative structures moviemakers utilized to typify post-Stalinist masculinity. For example, Soviet directors, influenced by the Polish Film School, Italian auteur cinema, the Czechoslovak New Wave, and the British New Wave, began experimenting with the limits of socialist realism, relying alternatively on quasi-documentary or experimental cinematography. By employing observational rather than expository filmmaking techniques, directors avoided Stalinist monumentality, and produced spontaneous and individualized protagonists.

Historiography

My study speaks directly to an emerging subdiscipline on Soviet masculinity. Scholars in Soviet studies have successfully utilized gender both as a subject and as a category of analysis of Russian history. An analogous examination of the male "state of affairs" complements and enhances the work done by women's historians who have complicated commonly accepted periodizations and conceptualizations of Soviet history. And while scholars have overlooked the male context for the most part, it is receiving

increasing attention, because symbolically and practically, masculinity had a privileged relationship vis-à-vis the governing ideology. Though understudied, the study of Soviet-era masculinity has thus far proven crucial in (re)framing questions about how political power operates in a one-party state.[39] My dissertation is the first study of the intersection between politics and masculinity in the immediate post-Stalin period. Drawing on works of scholars who have focused on the revolutionary and Stalinist periods, my project shows how invested communist authorities continued to be in simultaneously empowering and controlling male images to ensure their authority.

While Khrushchev's personal life,[40] domestic reforms,[41] and foreign policy[42] have received attention from scholars, the social and cultural dimensions of the post-Stalin years

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[39] For literary and cinematic analyses of masculinity see Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008); John Haynes, *New Soviet Man: Gender and Masculinity in Stalinist Soviet Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Eliot Borenstein, *Men Without Women: Masculinity and Revolution in Russian Fiction, 1917-1929* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), and Sheila Fitzpatrick, "The World of Ostap Bender: Soviet Confidence Men in the Stalin Period," *Slavic Review* 61, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 535-57. For the intersection of masculinity and (homo)sexuality see Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) and Douglas Northrop, "Sexual and Gender Dissent: Homosexuality as Resistance in Stalin's Russia," in ed. Lynne Viola, *Contending With Stalinism: Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 139-69.

[40] The Khrushchev era is perhaps best known for the impetuous, impish, and ultimately paradoxical figure of Nikita Sergeevich himself. Khrushchev's memoirs, a number of scholarly biographies, as well as remembrances of his family and inner circle provide us with a sense of the First Secretary as a man and a political figure. See S. N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev: An Inside Account of the Man and His Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), A. Adzhubei, *Te desiat' let* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989), R. A. Medvedev and Zh. A. Medvedev, *Khrushchev: The Years in Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), William Tompson, *Khrushchev: A Political Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), Iu. Ia. Gerchuk, *"Krovoizliianie v MOSKh," ili Khrushchev v Manezhe* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008).

[41] Carl Linden, *Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership, l957-l964* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966); Martin McCauley, *Khrushchev and the Development of Soviet Agriculture: The Virgin Land Programme, l953-l964* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1976); George Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982); Martin McCauley, ed. *Khrushchev and Khrushchevism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987); Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization: The Consolidation of the Modern System of Soviet Production Relations, 1953-1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); James Richter, *Khrushchev's Double Bind: International Pressures and Domestic Coalition Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); A. V. Pyzhikov, *Opyt*

remain in need of reconceptualization. One of the main problems historians of the Khrushchev era face is determining the true impact of de-Stalinization on Soviet culture. Thaw-era culture has generally been conceptualized as a struggle between "liberal" and "conservative" forces. This Cold War binary dovetailed other binaries typical of the totalitarian school: unscrupulous censorship regime vs. intrepid artists and inferior official literature vs. unofficial literary masterpieces. Moreover, much of Western scholarship had focused on literary developments and the many Soviet literati who either published abroad or emigrated from the Soviet Union. It is therefore no surprise that the era is more famous for its novels (such as Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*) than for the period's most controversial films. Painting, theatre, and cinema, among others, have received attention only if they became a political *cause*

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modernizatsii Sovetskogo obshchestva v 1953-1964 godakh: Obshchestvenno-politicheskii aspekt (Moscow: Gamma, 1998); Iu.V. Aksiutin and A.V. Pyzhikov, *Poststalinskoe obshchestvo: Problema liderstva i transformatsiia vlasti* (Moscow: Nauchnaia kniga, 1999); I. E. Zelenin, *Agrarnaia politika N.S. Khrushcheva i sel'skoe khoziaistvo* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2001); V. A. Kozlov, *Mass Uprisings in the USSR: Protest and Rebellion in the Post-Stalin Years* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); T. A. Chumachenko, *Church and State in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev Years* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2002); and Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith, eds. *Soviet State and Society under Nikita Khrushchev* (London: Routledge, 2009).

[42] Dan Heldman, *The USSR and Africa: Foreign Policy under Khrushchev* (New York: Praeger, 1981); Vladimir Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996); I. V. Bystrova, *Voenno-promyshlennyi kompleks SSSR v gody kholodnoi voiny: Vtoraia polovina 40-kh-nachalo 60-kh godov* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2000); S. N. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); John Barber and Mark Harrison, eds. *The Soviet Defense Industry Complex from Stalin to Khrushchev* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000); Hope Harrison, *Driving the Soviets up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-1961* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006); Kitty Newman, *Macmillan, Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis 1958-1960* (London: Routledge, 2007); and Gerkhard Wettig, *N.S. Khrushchev i Berlinskii Krizis 1958-1963 godov: Politika ugroz i vozvedenie Berlinskoĭ steny* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2007).

célèbre.[43] For this reason many histories of the Thaw cultural scene focus on cultural policies rather than the art itself.[44]

Consequently, one of the central tasks facing historians of the post-Stalinist period is determining the extent and character of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization reforms. Did the successive thaws and freezes of Khrushchev's liberalization signal a decisive and substantive turn away from Stalin's authoritarian ethos or were the 1950s and 1960s simply a Stalinism redux? Oleg Kharkhordin, for instance, has argued that Khrushchev simply replaced Stalin's dualism of law and terror with a dualism of law and social pressure. In fact, Kharkhordin maintains that the Khrushchev leadership, which is generally associated with relaxation of state controls, actually promoted "a system of communal enslavement" which was "more meticulous and thorough in its attention to each individual than the more openly repressive Stalinist one it replaced."[45] Even though it is undeniable that state control continued after 1953, my study demonstrates that the mechanisms of repression and coercion declined enough to allow for an emergence of a critically-minded point of view that contested the officially-sanctioned perspective. My research therefore reflects the perspective of the majority of scholars studying the Khrushchev period who complicate our understanding of how individuals negotiated their interactions with official ideology by focusing their attention on the construction of individual mentality, private life, and interpersonal

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[43] Thaw-era music recently received a thoughtful book-length study. P. J. Schmelz, *Such Freedom, If Only Musical: Unofficial Soviet Music During the Thaw* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[44] The most frequently quoted and analyzed incidents are Khrushchev's 1962 visit to the Manege where he famously threatened abstract painters, "Gentlemen, we are waging war on you," and his infamous 1963 Kremlin address to the creative intelligentsia when he menacingly warned, "What, you think we forgot how to arrest people?" See P. Johnson and L. Labedz, eds., *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1965).

[45] O. V. Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 298-99.

relationships.[46] In other words, the studies dealing with the 1950s and 1960s that have emerged in the past decade have aimed to recreate the variety and complexity inherent in the lives of ordinary citizen, analyzing how Soviet subjects made sense of their ideology-heavy existence.[47]

My dissertation extends the field's interest in Soviet subjectivity by examining how a set of directors strove to provide audiences with an alternative way of seeing and experiencing reality. Although my study does not examine actual individuals' responses to ideological realities, it showcases how filmmakers battled to affect the moviegoers' perception of their own subjectivity, essentially diversifying and de-ideologizing the ways in which audiences thought about the world around them. In essence, the new heroes taught

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[46] Earlier the purview of literary scholars, questions of selfhood, individuation, and self-representation started a new trend in the ongoing gravitation from social to cultural history in the Soviet field, particularly in works on Stalinism. Some examples of subjectivity studies in Soviet history are: Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary under Stalin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); and Orlando Figes, *The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

[47] L. Alekseeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990); Donald Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era: De-Stalinisation and the Limits of Reform in the USSR, 1953-1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); L. A. Sidorova, *Ottepel' v istoricheskoi nauke: Sovetskaia istoriografiia pervogo poslestalinskogo desiatiletiia* (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 1997); E. Iu. Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945-1957* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998); P. L. Vail' and A. A. Genis, *60-e: mir Sovetskogo cheloveka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001); Roger Markwick, *Rewriting History in Soviet Russia: The Politics of Revisionist Historiography, 1956-1974* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Erik Kulavig, *Dissent in the Years of Khrushchev: Nine Stories about Disobedient Russians* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Melanie Ilic, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood, eds. *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Thomas Wolfe, *Governing Soviet Journalism: The Press and the Socialist Person after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Polly Jones, ed. *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Donald J. Raleigh, *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Deborah Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007); Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society, 1941-1991* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Stephen Bittner, *The Many Lives of Khrushchev's Thaw: Experience and Memory in Moscow's Arbat* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Vladimir Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Miriam Dobson, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform After Stalin* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Susan Emily Reid, "In the Name of the People: The Manege Affair Revisited," *Kritika*: *Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no.4 (2005): 673-716; and Catriona Kelly, "'Thank You for the Wonderful Book': Soviet Child Readers and the Management of Children's Reading, 1950-75," *Kritika*: *Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no.4 (2005): 717-53.

moviegoers to experience their microcosm through the medium of emotion rather than reason. In opposition to the Stalinist masculine ideal, which was steeped in the language of historic progress and the primacy of communal interests, post-Stalinist cinematic heroes ceased representing historic types guided by historic forces and became individuals defined by immediate concerns. Although Khrushchev did not repudiate socialist realism or the notion of the Marxist dialectic, he discredited the historic monumentalism characteristic of Stalinism, commanding artists to base their works on personal histories. Thus the post-Stalinist project was more than an exercise in political liberalization; it was a cardinal reinvention of seeing and experiencing reality.

Eventually, the regime began feeling threatened by its own creation—a masculinity that was filmed as it was in reality: imperfect, faltering, ambiguous. Once such images became available en masse, they alarmed politicians and censors, who experienced such men as testimony to the fact that the communist system was failing in creating the New Soviet Man, weakening the notion of inevitable historic progress. At the 1961 Twenty-second Party Congress, Khrushchev attempted to revive the populace's sense of a larger historic mission by promising that the Soviet people would arrive at full-blown communism within a generation and would achieve American living standards by 1980. However, the way of seeing had become so intently personal and presentist that the call to arms failed to rouse passions.

In addition to contributing to the effort to reconceptualize the Soviet 1950s and 1960s, this project will also add to the history of Thaw cinema. Only in the past two decades have Russian scholars availed themselves of recently declassified archival material,

producing several document collections and articles on Khrushchev-era cinema.[48] Despite these valuable contributions, Thaw cinema remains in need of a systematic analysis. The first monograph offering an overview of prevalent Thaw-era cinematic genres and themes did not appear until 2000.[49] This valuable study was followed by Aleksandr Prokhorov's important 2007 book, which complicated the liberal vs. conservative binarism commonly associated with the Thaw by identifying the major Stalinist tropes that survived de-Stalinization in the way writers and directors portrayed and conceptualized Soviet reality.[50] Challenging Prokhorov's conclusion, my dissertation demonstrates that the breaks with Stalinist ideals were much more significant than the continuities. Thaw-era artists were in dialogue with the Stalinist legacy—but only insofar as it provided them with an anti-ideal. Alternative Khrushchev-era masculinities were meant to discredit the hypermasculine standards of the Stalin era and the values associated with them. Moreover, my study of artists' and politicians' debates illustrates how the memory of Stalin affected not only the making of Soviet movie heroes but also how those affiliated with the movie industry publicly remembered the Stalinist past and advocated a decisive break from it. More important, however, was the fact that filmmakers devised a fresh way of seeing and legitimizing a new (individualized) perspective from which to make sense of daily realities. Thus, even though Stalinist tropes survived within the context of a shared cultural legacy, I argue that

[48] The three essential document collections on cinema for the Thaw period are: V. A. Troianovskii, comp. *Kinematograf ottepeli.* Vol.1, *K 100-letiiu mirovogo kino* (Moscow: Materik, 1996), V. I. Fomin, comp., *Kinematograf ottepeli*, vol. 2, *Dokumenty i svidetel'stva* (Moscow: Materik, 1998), and V. P. Mikhailov, comp., *Zapreshchennye fil'my: Dokumenty, svidetel'stva, kommentarii* (Moscow: Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut kinoiskusstva, 1993). There is also a collection of documents from the central party archives of the post-Stalin period that illuminates the everyday activities of the cultural apparatus during the Thaw. See E. S. Afanas´eva, V. Iu. Afiani, L. A. Velichanskaia, Z. K. Vodop'ianova, and E. V. Kochubei, eds., *Ideologicheskie komissii TsK KPSS, 1958-1964: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1998).

[49] Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).

[50] Aleksandr Prokhorov, *Unasledovannyi diskurs: Paradigmy stalinskoi kul'tury v literature i kino ottepeli* (St. Petersburg: Akademicheskii Proekt, 2007).

filmmakers employed them from a substantively different vantage point that was grounded in presentism and individualized histories. Unlike party officials, who preferred to limit de-Stalinization to the specific sin of the "personality cult," the *shestidesiatniki* directors objected to the entire system of values that informed the Soviet 1930s and 1940s.

Since movie production is intimately tied to the practice of censorship, my dissertation also represents a much needed commentary on the institution of film censorship after the Stalin years. The dearth of research that exists on Soviet censorship deals largely with literature and journals;[51] there is no monograph that specifically examines the role of censorship in post-Stalin Soviet film.[52]

Dissertation Outline

The dissertation comprises six chapters. The first chapter examines the movie industry's evolution and contextualizes the ideological concept of the "New Soviet Man" from the October Revolution to Stalin's death in 1953. In order to fully showcase the significance of the profound changes that occurred in the two decades following Stalin's death, it is necessary to identify sociopolitical and cultural trends that shaped the Soviet movie industry during its first four decades. In particular, this chapter examines two aspects of Soviet cinema history. One section focuses on the history of the movie industry as a part

[51] See, for example, Herman Ermolaev, *Censorship in Soviet Literature, 1917-1991* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), Harold Swayze, *Political Control of Literature in the USSR, 1946-1959* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), and A. V. Blium, *A Self-Administered Poison: The System and Functions of Soviet Censorship* (Oxford: European Humanities Research Centre, 2003). A. V. Blium has also published a valuable document collection dealing with the history of Soviet censorship; see A. V. Blium, *Tsenzura v Sovetskom Soiuze, 1917-1991: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004).

[52] The one monograph that exists on the topic of censorship in Soviet film relies on officially released documents rather than archival material for its conclusions. See L. H. Cohen, *The Cultural-Political Traditions and Developments of the Soviet Cinema, 1917-1972* (New York; Arno Press, 1974).

of the state's propaganda mission while the second section details the development of the New Soviet Man as an extension of official ideology.

The revision of a trope central to Russian culture—that of "fathers and sons"—is the focus of the second chapter. This generational trope was not inverted but expanded to allow for a more liberal interpretation of intergenerational dynamics. De-Stalinization began as Khrushchev's tool to push through political reform and ensure his grasp on power. At the same time, de-Stalinization served as an impetus to undermine the authority of the iconoclastic Stalinist patriarch—the ever-wise, father-figure who leads his young, politically spontaneous protégées to political consciousness. This hierarchical relationship changed substantively during the Thaw as children, adolescents, and youth become models for adults. The period's movies extolled the authenticity and innocence of boys and young men, who often served as a corrective to their imperfect seniors, their would-be examples.

The third chapter showcases a cardinal rethinking of traits stereotypically considered feminine and how these "feminine" characteristic became central to masculine identity in the Khrushchev era. As moviemakers struggled to create a post-Stalinist set of "articles of faith," they self-consciously shied away from the aggressive, bellicose rhetoric typical of Stalinism and temporarily ceased relying exclusively on patriarchal imagery to define Soviet collective identity. Instead, films placed female protagonists as catalysts for change and symbols of redemption. Soviet directors utilized heroines and their femininity to demonstrate ways in which the Soviet state valued individual perspective and initiative. In fact, Soviet films of the period employed heroines to advance the notion that individuals lacking empathy and strong self-will cannot be productive community members.

Chapter 4 examines why the figure of the scientist emerged as the embodiment of the reformist intelligentsia's masculine ideal. During the late 1950s and 1960s the scientist became the period's iconic profession and figure. Theses celluloid scientists reflected the period's ambiguity overall as their lives expressed a dual and conflicting message. On the one hand, scientists, as figures fixated on their research, bolstered the official rhetoric that an individual's self-fulfillment comes through self-sacrifice to the common cause. On the other hand, as figures dedicated to objective truth rather than ideological imperatives or careerist exigencies, scientists personified the intelligentsia's liberal views on the limits of official power and the inviolability of individual freedoms.

The penultimate chapter traces the way in which the rise of Soviet sociology substantively shaped the way in which moviemakers and party members discussed the nature of celluloid masculinity and the validity of particular movie heroes. The obvious differences sociologists identified among Soviet moviegoers initially justified the intelligentsia's contention that each film and each hero has a target audience, discrediting the idea that a single masculine archetype should exist in practice. However, an increased focus on empirical sociological research also weakened the liberal filmmakers' claim that they represented the voice of the people and that their films reflected popular sentiment.

The final chapter examines how certain Soviet films fit in with experimental East Central European and West European cinematographic trends to identify ways in which post-Stalinist masculinity resembled masculinities appearing on screens across the continent. Parallels between experimental European cinematography—the Polish Film School, the British New Wave, Italian auteur cinema, and the Czechoslovak New Wave—and a small

number of Soviet productions showcase both the artificiality of Cold War borders and a pan-European cultural legacy that conceptualized modern masculinity in comparable terms.

Chapter 1

Dethroning the Stalinist Hero

During almost three decades of Joseph Stalin's reign (1928-53) the red screen depicted strong, handsome, and unambiguously upright male heroes. As products of socialist realism, hyper-masculine film heroes popularized and privileged hierarchy, obedience, and uniformity as core national ideals. After Stalin's death in 1953, however, movie heroes became less than perfect in both appearance and behavior. This chapter examines what factors caused such a sudden demise of Stalinist hypermasculine supermen and the practical implications of this shift for post-Stalinist society on the Cold War stage.

One of the principal reasons why moviemakers drew movie heroes to scale was the humanization of the Soviet system following the excesses of Stalinism. In 1956, Stalin's successor, N. S. Khrushchev, denounced the Great Leader's tyranny and his "cult of personality" at the Twentieth Party Congress. Khrushchev not only exposed Stalin's abuse of power and his crimes against innocent party members, but also made a mockery of how the former despot used films to embellish and distort historical events. Khrushchev testified: "Stalin loved to see the film, *The Unforgettable Year of 1919*, which portrayed him on the steps of an armored train, where he was practically vanquishing the foe with his own saber."[1] Khrushchev also ridiculed Stalin for rarely traveling and for never meeting with city workers and kolkhoz farmers to learn about the real circumstances of their lives. Khrushchev

[1] N. S. Khrushchev, *The Crimes of the Stalin Era: Special Report to the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU* (New York: The New Leader Publishing, 1962), 57.

lampooned the Father of the People, claiming he rarely saw, let alone related to, his "offspring." Khrushchev proclaimed that Stalin "knew the country and agriculture only from films. And these films dressed up and beautified the existing situation in agriculture. Many films depicted kolkhoz life with tables collapsing under the weight of turkeys and geese. Evidently, Stalin thought that it was actually so."[2] Khrushchev challenged the way cinematographers depicted the Soviet Union's past and present, urging them to present contemporary realities in their true colors. In May 1957 Khrushchev described earnest Bolsheviks as those "who weigh real conditions and potentialities of their actions, who are unafraid of difficulties, who never conceal contradictions, and who are able openly and honestly to tell their people the truth, bitter as it may sometimes be."[3] With this sentiment, Khrushchev legitimized a "thawing" of Soviet cultural life, signaling an expansion of political and artistic freedoms.

The periodization of the Thaw varies among scholars, underscoring its volatile nature. For the purposes of this project, I define the chronological limits of the period as starting in 1953 (the death of Stalin) and ending in 1968 (the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia), years well suited to facilitating a comprehensive view of the Thaw-era aesthetics in cinema. Although the censorship apparatus grew alternatively stronger and weaker throughout the period, the core ideas behind the period's reformist efforts remained stable until the violent termination of the Prague Spring. Although in this periodization Thaw reforms predate and outlive Khrushchev's term in office (1956-64), it suggests that Khrushchev's reforms were, in spirit, an organic development of both Soviet society and the political system, and, to a

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[2] Ibid., 58

[3] Thomas P. Whitney, ed., *Khrushchev Speaks: Selected Speeches, Articles, and Press Conferences, 1949-1961* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 280.

certain extent independent of Khrushchev's pronouncements. In other words, I do not view the Thaw, or the long 1960s, exclusively as a result of Khrushchev's reformation of the Stalinist system; crucial to our understanding of the Thaw are the many spontaneous social and cultural processes that were beyond party control. The transformation of celluloid masculinity certainly benefited from the relaxation of censorship but the appearance and character of the new masculine ideal was equally dependant on currents independent of political activities.

In combating the Stalinist authoritarian legacy, Khrushchev opened the "secret speech" by stating that "it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics, akin to those of a god."[4] Consequently, Thaw-era films began to reflect daily lives of ordinary citizens who expressed themselves in an unaffected manner and whose worldview was not based on the latest party slogan. Khrushchev-era heroes were ordinary-looking, individually-minded, and often self-doubting; their individuality reflected Khrushchev's commitment to reversing Stalin's famous 1945 dictum that men are merely cogs who keep "our great state machine in motion."[5] The advent of more ordinary movie heroes with whom the audiences could identify signaled Khrushchev's commitment to de-Stalinization and to increased artistic freedoms.

But as the country's domestic and international context changed, many contemporary commentators—and even Khrushchev himself—began regarding post-Stalinist masculinity as highly problematic and even subversive. With the intensification of the Cold War, commentators became more and more critical of ordinary heroes as ill suited for the task of

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[4] Khrushchev, *The Crimes of the Stalin Era*, 3.

[5] "Priem v Kremle v chest' uchastnikov parada Pobedy," *Pravda*, June 27, 1945, p. 2.

rallying the masses to decisive action. In 1958, for example, the highly decorated aviator B. F. Gofman recalled how inspired he and his friends were by the 1939 movie *Destroyers* (Istrebiteli). Gofman related that the film's protagonist impacted how he and his peers lived their lives. Addressing a group of cinematographers, he admonished that, if they failed to make moviegoers want to be just as heroic, "then with time there will be no one inspired enough to fly to the moon."[6]

Khrushchev continued to advance de-Stalinization throughout his tenure, adopting and propagating a motto that proclaimed the country's main goal: to surpass the US in per capita production by 1970 and to achieve communism by 1980. In Pittsburgh on September 24, 1959, he declared: 'We have a very popular slogan in our country right now—'catch up with and overtake the United States.'"[7] Khrushchev made this slogan an ideological mantra at the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961, where he announced that the "current generation will live under communism."[8]

Although achieving communism meant material abundance and high living standards, the inner world of men and women who would populate the Communist state was of equal importance to Soviet authorities. On June 18, 1963, a secretary of the Communist Party, L. F. Il'ichev, gave the opening address to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party entitled "The Party's Immediate Ideological Tasks." He asked: "Comrades! We know in what material conditions we will live twenty years from now. Our living standards have been calculated and confirmed by numbers and statistics. . . . But what will the people be

[6] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 900, ll. 18-19. Gofman delivered his comments in March 1959 during a panel in the Cinematographers' Union on the "Character of the Contemporary Hero in Soviet Cinema."

[7] N. S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev in America* (Crosscurrent Press: New York, 1960), 168.

[8] "Programma KPSS, Section V, Part 1," *Pravda,* 30 July, 1961.

like? What will their moral principles be?"[9] The questions were, of course, rhetorical as Il'ichev had a specific image in mind. The builder of communism was supposed to be a person of "great spiritual wealth, moral integrity, aesthetic discernment, and impressive physical stature."[10] Despite the urgency of promoting such male heroes on movie screens across the country, Il'ichev accused filmmakers of showcasing ideologically unsuitable protagonists. He griped that even in movies about the Great Patriotic War, Soviet soldiers look "more like victims than self-assured and manly fighters against fascism."[11] Il'ichev warned artists that the misuse of government funds and resources in the ongoing struggle against bourgeois ideology would be professionally reckless. Those directors and scriptwriters whose works and heroes did not engender confidence in and enthusiasm for the achievement of communism by 1980 were imperiling their careers. After all, if the country was to catch up with and surpass the US, self-aware protagonists were counterproductive at best and subversive at worst. The regime now saw these heroes as negatively affecting the popular mood.

As a result, they wanted heroes reminiscent of Stalinist supermen to reiterate the supremacy of the Soviet system. Khrushchev himself soon noticed a lack of films that could inspire and mobilize the masses to victory over the Americans. During a speech delivered to Soviet writers and artists on March 8, 1963, the Soviet Premier criticized M. Khutsiev's 1962 movie *Il'ich's Gate* (Zastava Il'icha) in particular. Khrushchev reflected unfavorably on the movie's three main protagonists: "They were shown as men who know neither why nor how to live. And this during our time when we're building communism, guided by the Program

[9] RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 635, l. 70.

[10] Ibid., l. 97.

[11] Ibid., l. 92.

of the Communist Party! . . . No, our society cannot rely on men like that; they are not fighters who will remake the world." [12] Ironically, however, Khrushchev was defenseless against these kinds of heroes because de-Stalinization, developing in tandem with Cold War competition, questioned authority and condemned the infallibility of those in power.

In other words, Khrushchev and the censors were caught up in a paradoxical situation. The campaign against Stalin's cult of personality allowed filmmakers to document life in a less sanitized fashion, rejecting the Stalinist glamorization of everyday realities. Consequently, movie heroes became recognizable real-life figures. There was no proscription, however, for exactly how "real" the protagonists could and should be. Scriptwriters and moviemakers made use of this ambiguity to promote a range of masculinities, whose relationship to authority, ideology, and the collective was anything but straightforward. For the first time in two decades, the film industry offered not only alternative masculinities but also alternative ways of thinking about the role of state and society. Thus the debates between filmmakers and politicians I investigate in this dissertation reveal that the struggle to define post-Stalinist masculinity represented more than an attempt to fashion suitable role models for billions of Soviet moviegoers. At stake was the Communist Party's exclusive right to dictate the country's vision of the post-Stalinist future.

The Soviet Film Industry: Continuity and Change

The Stalin and Khrushchev eras produced masculinities at odds with each other. Despite their differences, the Stalin-era supermen and the Khrushchev-era sensitive existentialists were both political constructs, designed to reflect the priorities of those in

[12] N. S. Khrushchev, "Iz rechi N. S. Khrushcheva na vstreche rukovoditelei partii i pravitel'stva s deiateliami literatury i iskusstva," in *Kinematograf ottepeli,* vol.2, *Dokumenty i svidetel'stva,* comp. V. I. Fomin (Moscow: Materik, 1998), 132.

power and validate their social vision. The authorities relied heavily, and were dependent on, the film industry to produce the kinds of masculine icons that would shape the popular mood and mobilize the population. The regime's dependence on stirring propaganda led to growing investment of both financial and organizational resources into cinema. Thus the level of censorship, the degree of artistic autonomy, the amount of funding, and the endless efforts to obtain the latest technologies all speak to how vested Communist leaders were in creating a vision of reality that would validate official ideology.

The ways in which film production functioned is central to understanding how types of masculinities arose and developed. While both changing ideological priorities and international circumstances played a key role in film production during both the Stalin and Khrushchev eras, finances, technological advancement, and backroom political maneuverings often decided the fate of a film and its hero. Contextualizing the historic particularities of the moviemaking process shows that, although Soviet masculinity was at its core a political construct, economic and social factors defined its appearance and content. In the first decade of Soviet power, for example, the government was so starved for revenue that most of its profit came from foreign motion pictures, weakening the ascendancy of heroes who propagated a uniquely Bolshevik point of view.

As early as 1922, V. I. Lenin advised the first People's Commissar of Enlightenment A. V. Lunacharskii that, "you must always remember that of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema."[13] Visual propaganda proved to be an essential method of mobilizing a poorly literate and apolitical populace. Although the crucial role of cinema in Soviet life was not disputed during the heady days of the Civil War (1918-22) and the New Economic Policy (1921-28), its goals were a matter of frequent and heated disputes. The film industry was

[13] A.V. Lunacharskii, *Rasskazy o Lenine* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1985), 15.

intended to be a mass art, but it was unclear whether its influence should be used to entertain or to educate.[14] Before Stalin solidified his grip on power in 1928 and established socialist realism as the official artistic canon in 1934, the Main Committee on Political Education of the Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Glavprolitprosvet*) fought a losing battle to reform audience tastes. Soviet spectators expressed much more interest in US productions than in either experimental or propaganda films produced at home. Even when foreign films constituted only part of the repertoire, they remained more popular than domestic productions—unless the latter mimicked western films. On the one hand, the state film trust *Sovkino* criticized propagandistic agitational films for presenting Marxist ideas in a simplistic way. On the other hand, *Glavprolitprosvet* argued against the corrupting influence of bourgeois genres and themes explicit in the movies *Sovkino* produced and imported.

This debate was not merely about the public role of cinema, but defined how involved the state should be in shaping popular tastes and views. While *Sovkino* proponents pointed out that audiences should be offered a variety of genres and themes—especially if they showed a proclivity for them—*Glavprolitprosvet* officials countered that ideologically empty films betrayed the Bolshevik cause. With Stalin's rise to power and the initiation of the First Five-Year Plan in 1928 this debate came to an end and the "enlighteners" won. In dire need of propagandistic materials to shape popular attitudes about the twin processes of industrialization and collectivization, the Communist Party became the guardian of Soviet mores, determining what the audiences could consume. Central to this project was the creation of New Soviet People, Communist gender types that would reinforce the political order and all campaigns essential to its hegemony.

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[14] Denise J. Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 35-49.

To facilitate this task, the Communist Party endorsed socialist realism as the official artistic canon at the Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934. As an artistic policy and a way of thinking about Soviet reality, socialist realism accentuated the positive and the heroic, portraying the human condition as it could and should be. Drawing on the works and ideas of the avant-garde, socialist realism came to be defined as "a combination of the most matter-of-fact, everyday reality with the most heroic prospects."[15] Furthermore, Stalin's chief cultural commissar at the time, A. A. Zhadnov, noted in his speech that "Soviet literature must be able to show our heroes, must be able to glimpse our tomorrow." Initially intended for literary works, socialist realism soon became the obligatory standard for all artistic endeavors. Cinema became directly affected by this policy since the Soviet Union had begun producing and implementing its own sound technologies in 1931. As sound became more widespread so did the censorship of movie scripts. With the advent of "talkies" in Soviet cinematography and with the increased stress on socialist realism as official artistic policy, the official censorship organ, *Glavlit*, restricted the relatively laissez-faire creative license scriptwriters enjoyed during the 1920s.[16] At the same time, importing foreign films and technologies was banned after 1931 because the enlighteners felt capitalist productions would corrupt the laboring masses. Even though censorship became more invasive and a strict enforcement of socialist realism constricted the autonomy of scriptwriters and directors, Stalinist films enjoyed considerable popularity since Soviet filmmakers adopted many of Hollywood's strategies and techniques to make motion pictures both instructive and

[15] "Rech' sekretaria TsK VKP(b) A. A. Zhdanova," *Pervyi s"ezd pisatelei: Stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Ogiz, 1934), 4.

[16] The authorities considered the scriptwriter such an essential part of the filmmaking process that until the end of the Soviet Union the name of the author would open the credits of the film.

entertaining. Musicals were a particularly popular genre because they could propagandize the party's latest campaign and at the same time provide entertainment.

Boris Shumiatskii, the head of *Soiuzkino*, declared that, in order to be politically effective, filmmakers must create "cinema for the millions." Shumiatskii had echoed Luncharskii's sentiments about the necessity of relating political campaigns in a visually arresting manner: "If the public is not interested in the picture that we produce, it will become boring propaganda and we shall become boring agitators."[17] And while some criticized Shumiatskii for outdoing Hollywood in the scale and glitz of films made during his tenure (1930-37),[18] the appeal of the motion pictures he supported was undeniable. Movie heroes, who became increasingly uniform in their epic stature, their grand acts of bravery, and their bombastic rhetoric, boosted the appeal of Stalinist films. Crowds flocked to enjoy their favorite heroes over and over, watching them tread confidently in a mythic reality that was, according to the tenets of socialist realism, in the making, looming in the not-so-distant future.

The creation of such a reality populated by supermen was a delicate political task as Stalinist ideology became more restrictive. During the 1930s, censorship became more exacting in a manner that paralleled the political repression of the Stalinist regime. Feature film projects dragged out for months or years and could be terminated at any point along the way because of the capricious decision of one or another censoring committee. Iosif Manevich, who was a scriptwriter during the 1930s, remembered the arbitrary process of

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[17] Richard Taylor, "A 'Cinema for the Millions': Soviet Socialist Realism and the Problem of Film Comedy," *Journal of Contemporary History* 18, no. 3 (1983): 1.

[18] Purged and shot in 1937, Shumiatskii was accused of assembling a group of terrorists from within the cinema industry who allegedly planned to assassinate Stalin and the Politburo. Jamie Miller, "The Purges of Soviet Cinema, 1929–38," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2007): 5-26.

rejecting ideologically unsuitable films. He commented: "Writers, directors, editors would work for a year on a project, only to find out randomly that their labor was in vain even after the script had been approved, rehearsals had begun, and some scenes had been already filmed."[19] As even a cursory examination of statistics reveals, this strategy made little economic sense. In 1935 a total of thirty-four movies were shelved, costing the movie industry a total of thirteen million rubles. The following year, seventeen million rubles were wasted after fifty-five productions were deemed unacceptable for release. [20] By the late 1940s, the average number of days required to complete a motion picture was 423. By comparison, British, French, and U.S. films never took more than 240 days to shoot a film.[21] Such interference slowed down production and inhibited creativity. Although central planning was supposed to increase the film industry's productivity, production levels declined steadily through the 1930s. The industry released over one-hundred features annually at the end of the 1920s, but that figure fell to seventy by 1932 and to forty-five by 1934. It never again reached triple digits during the remainder of the Stalin era. In 1951 only nine motion pictures were released.[22] At the same time British and French film industries produced approximately 100 movies every year while the US released between 500 and 600 titles.

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[19] Iosif Manevich, *Za ekranom: Razroznennye listki zapisannykh naspekh razdumii nad proshlym* (Moscow: Novoe Izdatel'stvo, 2006), 154.

[20] Leonid Maksimenkov, introduction to *Kul'tura i vlast' ot Stalina do Gorbacheva: Kremlevskii kinoteatr, 1928-1953. Dokumenty*, edited by G. L. Bondareva (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005), 41.

[21] Mariia Zezina, "S tochki zreniia istorii kinozala: Kinoprokat i massovoi zritel' v gody ottepeli," *Istoriia strany, istoriia kino*, comp. S.S. Sekirinskii (Moscow: Znak, 2004), 392.

[22] I. Fomin, introduction to *Kinematograf ottepeli: Dokumenty i svidetel'stva* (Moscow:Roskomkino, 1998), 7.

Not only were new productions crippled by the censorship apparatus but old movies were also in constant danger of being pulled from circulation for even the smallest ideological faux pas. For instance, Vladimir Shneiderov's 1935 movie about the dog Dzhul'bars was banned in 1938 because the background of one scene featured a portrait of the secret police leader Genrikh Iagoda, who had just been shot as a spy and an enemy of the people. This ideological witch-hunt led to a dismal situation in the national repertoire; by 1937 approximately 500 previously produced films were shelved, not to be seen again until after Stalin's death in 1953 or M. S. Gorbachev's ascension to power in 1985.[23] In 1951 audiences could watch a meagerly forty-six movies throughout the year: twelve Soviet, twenty-two East European, and twelve Western movies captured during World War II.[24] These statistics alone demonstrate how intolerant and paranoid the Stalinist system had become of films and narratives it considered subversive. Central to Stalinist hegemony was the policing of meaning and alternative social visions embodied in the appearance and actions of movie heroes.

More than any other Soviet leader, Stalin was deeply involved in movie production. He commented at the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 that "cinema is the most important means of mass agitation. Our task is to take this matter into our own hands."[25] True to his word, Stalin assumed control over the movie industry, interchangeably assuming roles of producer, director, screenwriter, as well as ultimate censor. He suggested titles, ideas and stories, worked on scripts, lectured directors, coached actors, ordered shoots and cuts, and

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Zezina, "Kinoprokat," 390.

[25] Bruce Franklin, ed. *The Essential Stalin: Major Theoretical Writings, 1905-52* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1972), 217.

released movies for distribution.[26] Shumiatskii, who was the head of the film industry from 1930 to 1937, regularly conducted private screenings for Stalin and Politburo members late at night. From May 1934 to January 1937 Shumiatskii recorded conversations that took place before and after the screening.[27] These documents illustrate how seriously the head of state and those closest to him approached the question of mass entertainment. These late night conversations, which usually occurred in the late evening and early morning hours, reveal that these men understood how film, as a medium of propaganda, functioned. Their conversations show not only how sensitive they were to ideological details, but also demonstrate how consciously they manipulated the technical aspects of the cinematic medium to construct particular impressions and to relay specific meanings.

In surveying the Stalinist ideological and artistic system, it becomes obvious that the film industry was both powerful and ineffective. The power of Stalinist cinema lay in its lack of ambiguity in meaning and the control the authorities had over film production. By late Stalinism, a theory of "masterpieces" had emerged among bureaucrats. The ideologues argued that since too much money was wasted on movies that were economically unprofitable and/or ideologically problematic, the state should invest more resources in fewer projects that would guarantee satisfaction on both fronts. The increased censorship levels led to close readings of both the script and the movie by four or five different bodies simultaneously.[28] The movies were thus "masterpieces" of socialist realism, self-consciously

[26] For a detailed account of Stalin's involvement in the censorship process see Grigorii Mar'iamov, *Kremlevskii tsenzor: Stalin smotrit kino* (Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1992).

[27] Shumiatskii's transcripts of comments from Stalin, V. M. Molotov, L. M. Kaganovich, and K. E. Voroshilov can be found in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 61 (2002): 281–346, and 62 (2003): 115–88, as well as the aforementioned document collection *Kul'tura i vlast'*, 919-1052.

[28] Zezina, "Kinoprokat," 392.

enshrining official theories into absolute truths to live by. At the same time, the film industry became a victim of its own power; ideological control of meaning left directors unable to improvise beyond the narrow confines of the officially sanctioned mythical and positivist reality. Moreover, the few scripts that dealt with permissible topics were given to ideologically trustworthy filmmakers to the detriment of young filmmakers. It is no surprise that, in the last several years of Stalin's rule, moviemakers produced only one genre: historical biography. Movie screens were populated only by great men—admirals, generals, scientists, writers. But even these were not accounts of people as much as depictions of types that stood in for ideas central to the regime's priorities.

Considering the anemic nature of the film industry in the five years before Stalin's death in 1953, its revival appears even more stunning. In the decade following Stalin's death, cinema radically changed. Perhaps most important to this study is that, as early as 1954, historical biographies were excluded from future production plans and their low attendance figures ensured that these Stalinist remnants would disappear from neighborhood movie theaters as well. While new movies earned upward of 90 million rubles, Stalinist celluloid biographies of "great men" consistently ranked at the bottom of the profitability scale, never making more than 20 million rubles.[29]

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that, in the fifteen years following Stalin's death, the Soviet film industry experienced a revolution. Its source was cinema's rising independence and ability to assert its own agenda. The industry's autonomy arose for the most part due to the exponentially growing number of movies produced and released. In 1951, for example, the USSR produced only thirty films and, out of those, only six were feature films. By 1956, only three years after Stalin's death, the film industry completed 113

[29] Ibid., 398.

movies, 85 of which were feature productions. After 1958 the numbers of domestic feature films would never fall below triple digits. Because the Stalinist system was designed to closely monitor the filming of no more than thirty "masterpieces," the upsurge in production left the censorship apparatus ill-equipped to deal effectively with the avalanche of new projects. The productivity of the film industry also led to a growth of the censorship apparatus. In the early 1950s only 70 people were employed in the Ministry of Culture's Central Committee for the production of films; by 1963 the newly established Committee on Cinematography employed 400 workers who regulated directors and movie studio production plans. The number of officials continued growing and by 1970s there were approximately 700 officials "managing" Soviet cinema.[30]

Despite the ballooning bureaucratic machine, filmmakers maintained a level of independence throughout the fifteen-year period because of their support of each other. Unlike the Writers Union or the Musicians Union, which were created by official decree, cinematographic workers never had a professional association. In 1957, some of the greatest names in Soviet cinematography—M. I. Romm, I. A. Pyr'ev, E.I. Gabrilovich, Iu. Ia. Raizman, and many others—invested their time, effort, and reputation to organize the Cinematographers Union. From Vasil'evskaia number thirteen, the official headquarters of the union, both veteran and up-and-coming directors worked to establish a unified front against political interference, defending each other's works from ideological watchdogs. Although the union was not established until 1965, its organizing committee (*orgkomitet*) under the direction of Ivan Pyr'ev unified the most capable, energetic masters to negotiate the day's most progressive—and most problematic—feature films. In addition to their unity

[30] Introduction to *Kinematograf ottepeli*, vol. 2, *Dokumenty i svidetel'stva,* comp. V. I. Fomin (Materik: Moscow, 1998), 11.

of purpose, these filmmakers strengthened cinema's autonomy because Khrushchev's unpredictable reforms left censors without coherent and consistent guiding principles with which to judge cinematic content.

The Cinematographers Union was all the more dynamic because new, innovative directors began filling its ranks. A. A. Tarkovskii, V. M. Shukshin, K. G. Muratova, L. E. Shepit'ko, G. N. Chukhrai, and other new talents brought a different perspective and novel stories to national screens. This generation had fought for Stalin, survived the horrors of war, witnessed the downfall of Stalin's cult of personality, and subsequently filmed the turbulent Khrushchev era with fresh insight and fervor. The sense of passionate immediacy in their works goaded dogmatic ideologues and energized viewers. Both experienced and novice filmmakers alike began filming in individual and idiosyncratic ways. Grigorii Chukhrai, for example, recalled: "When we came back from the war, we were completely changed. We felt that now everything can be substantially different. And this was noticeable in motion pictures made by my generation. Our older colleagues, having survived the war, also hoped for better things. They too were trying to build a better life in the way that they could."[31] Indeed, veteran filmmakers encouraged young directors to focus on their contemporaries in depicting postwar realities. S. I. Rostotskii, opposing Stalinist dogma on hierarchical authority, boldly stated: "A student will never surpass his teacher if he copies him instead of defying him."[32] Crossing generational differences, Soviet moviemakers dedicated themselves to examining the problems of the everyday in a way that exposed Soviet realities in an unadulterated and factual fashion.

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[31] V. Troianovskii, ed. *Kinematograf ottepeli*. Vol. 1, *K 100-letiiu mirovogo kino* (Materik: Moscow, 1998), 172.

[32] S. Rostotskii, "Novoe kino," *Iskusstvo kino*, 1 (1957): 5.

Many directors took advantage of the gradually opening borders and the influences coming from Western Europe to frame their new approach. M. Antonioni's and F. Fellini's auteur films, and the British, Polish, and Czechoslovak New Wave motion pictures transformed European cinema during the late 1950s and 1960s and distinctively affected Soviet filmmakers. Combined with the Soviet Union's strong artistic tradition of grappling with the role of the individual within a larger social framework, the New Wave's emphasis on unadulterated depictions of reality produced movies that amplified the protagonist's sense of self, validating and empowering individual perspective. More than replicas of European trends, which were more cynical about the human capacity to reason, the Soviet cinematic trend emphasized the ambivalence, dynamism, and tensions inherent in the human condition. Absent were black humor, irreverence for established moral norms, and the impressionistic language so characteristic of the Italian auteur cinema and the Czechoslovak New Wave. Absence of these elements was not simply a reflection of conservatism on the part of Soviet directors or tight restrictions of the censorship system. On the contrary, Soviet filmmakers drew much of their inspiration from their British, Italian, Czechoslovak, and Polish colleagues. At the same time, Khrushchev-era cinematic discourse was more than a social and political critique of Stalinist policies; it was a candid and an open-ended exploration of contemporary lives. Perhaps the relative lack of visual and narrative experimentalism made Soviet films all the more understandable and popular social commentaries about the country's changing landscape. The artistic intelligentsia's developed sense of social responsibility (evident in their biographies) motivated them to create films that would not only be artistically expressive but would also act as a transformative social force.

If attendance figures are any indication, Thaw-era Soviet directors were unusually successful in attracting large audiences to their works. Official statistics on yearly ticket sales demonstrate a spike in moviegoing attendance. In 1950, there were approximately one billon visits to the cinema throughout the union; by 1957, this figure rose exponentially and reached the three bullion mark. This increase was even more dramatic in non-Russian republics. In Kazakhstan attendance skyrocketed from 33 million spectators in 1950 to 113 million in 1956 and in Ukraine the numbers climbed from 212 million to 540 million during that same period.

Soviet audiences not only went to the movies frequently, but they preferred cinema over other types of leisure. A 1963 survey of Soviet citizens showed that 77.3 percent of the respondents attended the movies at least several times a month and 44.8 percent of the respondents reported that they frequented the cinema at least several times a week.[33] When asked how they usually spent a weekend, 48.8 percent of those surveyed reported moviegoing as their primary choice of weekend leisure.[34] The response is all the more impressive if compared to other weekend pastime pursuits. Cinema proved to be two times more popular than entertaining guests or visiting friends, and three times more popular than reading.[35]

The renaissance in moviegoing experienced in the fifteen years following Stalin's death demonstrates the central role cinema played in both official policy and the lives of Soviet citizens. The screen became a site of interchange and contestation, to which both

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[33]B. A. Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia.* Vol. 1, *Zhizn' 1-aia: Epokha Khrushcheva* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiia, 2001), 454.

[34]Ibid., 460.

[35]Ibid., 460-61.

ideologues and viewers reacted in journals, newspapers, and internal government records. Because film was such an important political tool, Communist authorities, like administrators in the 1920s, struggled to find a medium between propaganda and entertainment. Moreover, as foreign productions began to reach Soviet audiences again as the country's borders reopened, bureaucrats could not but rethink how to increase the appeal of Soviet movies without sacrificing communist morality.

Essential to this process was the rising authority of sociological research; as I reveal in the fifth chapter, by the mid to late 1960s, film critics claimed that every movie had its target audience. The marketing of films to particular groups, in turn, marked a radical shift in how films were made. Whereas Stalinist cinema created uniform movie heroes that embodied values of universal appeal, post-Stalinist ideologues and directors began filming with the intention of attracting specific audiences: housewives, male students, or pensioners. This strategy illustrates the rejection of the notion that a standardized, hegemonic masculinity typical of Stalin's day could attract and appeal to all strata of the population. Khrushchev's liberalization of the arts in general and the film industry in particular gave audiences a central role in determining which heroes could represent the national social vision.

Soviet Celluloid Heroes: Their Development and Differences

The Stalin-era model of production, which emphasized extensive censorship and centralized planning, gave rise to an iconographic masculinity defined by an absence of individual psychology. Evgeny Dobrenko recognized that Stalinist films were those in which "there is no individual fate, there is no element of everyday life, there are no human relationships, and psychology is absent. Characters do not speak, but orate; passions are not

experienced, but played—as in Greek tragedy—and they die here, as in operas, after long monologues on fighters' shoulders, in open fields, on burial mounds."[36] Stalinist movies placed these *übermenschen* within an ahistorical context; for instance, famed Soviet director A. P. Dovzhenko's distorted historical realities to fit contemporary ideology in his 1939 motion picture about the Ukrainian Civil War hero N. Shchors. One scene depicts a rural wedding and showcases cheerful peasants in their Sunday best, feasting from a table jam-packed with food—hardly an accurate reflection of the famine-stricken and starving population in Ukraine during the Civil War. As film scholar Vance Kepley notes, this scene was not so much a commentary of actual historic conditions as it was "inspired by the countless thirties posters and paintings showing the supposed outcome of Soviet economic progress, with groups of contented, well-fed peasants celebrating their happy lot."[37]

The Khrushchevite protagonist was in many ways the opposite. In 1954, a year after Stalin's death, one of the most prominent Soviet directors, Sergei Gerasimov, observed that, although many past productions were inarguably excellently executed and performed, they contained an essential flaw: "Many of these films violated the laws of history by fixating the audience's attention entirely on one historic personage. This cult of personality manifested itself in various degrees in different movies and prevented the true historical hero—the people—from being fully represented."[38] Directors ceased emphasizing the divinity of one superhero and began choosing protagonists from among "the masses." Film characters were supposed to be shown as life-size and reflect the daily realities of the average citizen. For

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[36] Evgeny Dobrenko, "Creation Myth and Myth Creation in Stalinist Cinema," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 1, no. 3 (2007): 259.

[37] Vance Kepley, *In the Service of the State: The Cinema of Alexander Dovzhenko* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 125.

[38] RGANI, f. 5, op. 17, d. 487, l. 176.

example, film critic A. V. Karaganov criticized the trend of portraying the negative character as materialistic and the protagonist as above material concerns.[39] Complaining that one cannot survive on idealism alone, he reflected on Soviet cinematography since Stalin's death: "Contemporary films do not feature a stream of consciousness and life-like spontaneity that would evoke reality's multi-dimensional and dynamic character."[40]

But before the life-like heroes emerged in cinema in the mid-1950s, they caused much debate in literary circles, which more quickly reacted to the possibilities of expanding artistic freedoms after Stalin's death. The discussions about how the New Soviet Man ought to look and behave began emerging as early as February 1952, a year before Stalin died. Playwright Nikolai Virta's article in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* launched what would turn into a campaign against the "no-conflict theory."[41] Virta and others attacked those dramatic works, prevalent during high Stalinism, which featured "conflict" where the good competed against the better, and which highlighted the decent protagonist struggling against an even more wholesome hero. Another turning point was the 1952 publication of Valentin Ovechkin's collection of narrative sketches *District Routine* (Raionnye budni), which reflected on kolkhoz life in a realistic and critical manner. So radical was the appearance of Ovechkin's sketch in the context of late Stalinism that Aleksandr Tvardovsky, the editor of the liberal literary journal *New World*, later compared it to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's 1962 ground-breaking work *A Day In the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, the first novel to discuss life in the labor camps. Tvardovsky wrote: "Solzhenitsyn, incidentally, outstanding as he is, is not unique or unprecedented in our literature. We should not forget the courage of Ovechkin's *District*

[39] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 899, l. 15.

[40] Ibid., l. 12.

[41] Nikolai Virta, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* March 29, 1952, p. 3.

Routine which appeared in *New World* as early as 1952 and marked a turning point."[42] Ovechkin criticized party leaders in the countryside, arguing that they concerned themselves only with the fulfillment of "the plan," and bothered themselves little with the well-being of workers, drastically diminishing the self-initiative and productivity of the kolkhoz workers. The sketch began a literary trend that demanded that Soviet literati pay more attention to the "trivialities of life" and the individual's inner life.

The publication of V. M. Pomerantsev's article "About Sincerity in Literature" in December 1953 continued to disparage the frequent glossing over of everyday problems. The literary critic accused Soviet literature of being more of a sermon than a confession. In criticizing S. Boldyrev's novel *The Decisive Years* in particular, Pomerantsev argued: "All we get is a too-well-known story line, completely bereft of emotional resonance, and flavored with a hero embodying the cult of personality. Therefore, one cannot believe in the characters in this book. The hero is a superhero. He is planned out, premeditated, made up, and schematic."[43] According to Pomerantsev, such books, which predominated during the Stalin era, sinned against the cardinal rule of literature: the sin of insincerity. Interestingly, Pomerantsev uses Ovechkin's sketch as a prototype against which he measures other works such as that of Boldyrev. Pomerantsev criticized both the "embellishment of reality" (*lakirovka deistvitel'nosti*) and the de-humanization of Soviet heroes. Pomerantsev argued with an imaginary Soviet author:

> Remember how your mechanic from the machine-tractor station dreams about a girl who has caught his eye—about how together they might repair the inventory? Did he really get married only for this? Does he really have his machine shop at home, too?! Or your miner, exclaiming: 'I really want to use the lengthened bore-holes! I wish the weekend would end sooner!' Where did you find such a mole, who spends

[42] Cited in E. R. Frankel, Novy Mir*: A Case Study in the Politics of Literature, 1952-1958* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 16.

[43] V. M. Pomerantsev, "Ob iskrennosti v literature," *Novyi Mir* 12 (1953): 218.

> all his time digging underground? Or the speech of a character in another one of your novellas, talking to his wife who had stolen a can of milk from the farm! That's the kind of language they use at meetings or in prosecutors' speeches during cases of theft, but not in face-to-face conversations between people.[44]

Thus Pomerantsev's article not only asked Soviet artists to pay closer attention to the darker side of life, but also to refrain from idealizing the Soviet hero, depicting him instead as a person of flesh and blood, capable of reflection and error. And though Pomerantsev's thoughts were criticized intermittently for two years following its publication, his ideas became central to how artists in general and cinematographers in particular approached their subjects.

The demise of the Soviet superman, his "de-heroizaton," and his increased involvement with his feelings and private life—heralded by Ovechkin and Pomerantsev—represented a sharp volte-face from the types of masculinity that embodied the spirit of Stalinism. Perhaps Boris Groys described Stalinist heroes best when he claimed: "In and of themselves the positive and negative heroes have no external appearance, because they express transcendental demiurgic forces. . . . They [writers and artists] almost seem to be in the employ of some sort of extraterrestrial bureau planning a trip to Earth—they want to make their envoys as anthropomorphic as possible, but they cannot keep the otherworldly void from gaping through all the cracks in the mask."[45] At the center of Stalinist masculinity was the rejection of formalism and promotion of romanticism. The most celebrated example were Stakhanovites, who could increase labor productivity by hundreds of percentage points through willpower alone. Correspondingly, Stalinist movie heroes denounced facts, technical realities, and objective limits as a cowardly excuse for passivity. Willpower was central to

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[44] Ibid., 229.

[45] Boris Groys, *The Total Art of Stalinism: Avant-Garde, Aesthetic Dictatorship, and Beyond* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 63.

any protagonist's identity as he overcame all obstacles that a formalistic bureaucrat viewed as insurmountable.

As monumental as Stalinist masculinity was, it was irreversibly toppled after the Twentieth Party Congress, when Khrushchev urged artists to cease idealizing Soviet realities. In accordance with Khrushchev's exhortation, filmmakers purged superheroic men dedicated exclusively to professional activities from their scenarios. In 1962, after Khrushchev's renewed attack on Stalin at the Twenty-second Party Congress, noted Soviet commentator and film critic V. A. Razumnyi phrased the need for a transformation in Soviet cinematography in the following way: "If many directors are considering elevating themes such as transferring technical equipment to the kolkhozes (as in the 1958 film *The Story of Our Days*) or the necessity of marshland reclamation (as in the 1960 film *The Folk of My Valley*), then we need to instruct them that these are not the problems we should be addressing."[46] Instead, Razumnyi argued, filmmakers should concentrate their attention on the formation of a new kind of individual, new kinds of interpersonal relationships.

Conclusion

Once Khrushchev delegitimized the Father of the Peoples, the entire Soviet symbolic order needed to be reconfigured to address the new ideological realities. Post-Stalinist masculinity played a central role in providing new fictional but functional models for archetypical Soviet citizenship. The Thaw represented a denunciation of Stalinist romanticism and focused instead on men qua men. This change affected not only how filmmakers portrayed masculinity, but also how they conceptualized the perspective from which they filmed Soviet reality. Unlike Stalinist heroes, whose ultimate goal was to

[46] RGALI, f. 2936, op.1, d. 152, ll. 14-15.

integrate into homosocial hierarchy by becoming self-disciplining subjects, the post-Stalinist protagonists sought to independently and idiosyncratically come to terms with a world they perceived as alien and sometimes inimical.

This shift did not emerge *ex nihilo* but rather transpired in conjunction with other broadscale post-Stalin transformations. The draconian censorship system that crippled the Stalinist film industry slowly came undone as the leadership insisted that the studios increase production. With a dramatic escalation of films being released—from a dozen in 1952 to over a hundred in 1958—the censorship apparatus could not adequately supervise the exponentially rising output of motion pictures. Moreover, the founding of the Cinematographers' Union in 1957 further ensured the industry's relative autonomy. Cinematographers jointly defended motion pictures that caught the eye of the censor and faced official condemnation. Thus the limitations of Stalin-era censorship after 1953 and the activism of the Cinematographers' Union after 1957 ensured that the day's most controversial protagonists reach audiences nationwide.

Chapter 2

Not My Father's Keeper:
Coming to Terms with Paternal and Political Authority

One of the most (in)famous films, if not of the Soviet period, then certainly the Khrushchev era, is M. M. Khutsiev's 1962 motion picture *Lenin's Guard* (Zastava Il'icha).[1] One scene became especially contentious. It featured a reunion between the young protagonist Sergei and the ghost of his father, who died during World War II at the young age of twenty-one. Sergei, who is struggling to determine life's purpose, counts on his father's advice on how to live. The father advises his son that "one must simply live." But when Sergei urges his father to reveal exactly how one should live, the father responds with a question: "How old are you?" And when the son tells his father he is twenty-three the latter retorts: "Well, I am twenty-one. How am I supposed to help you?" And then the ghost vanishes.

The ideological campaign N. S. Khrushchev galvanized against the film earned the movie its legendary status. Overnight, Khutsiev's motion picture became the *enfant terrible* of the film industry and was frequently invoked as an example of ideological immaturity and

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[1] *Lenin's Guard* has received much scholarly attention both because of the political controversy that surrounded it and because of M. Khutsiev cinematographic genius. See: Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 142-150; Tatiana Khlopliankina, *Zastava Il'icha: Sud'ba fil'ma (*Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1990); Evgenii Margolit, "Landscape, with Hero," in *Springtime for Soviet Cinema: Re/Viewing the 1960s*, ed. Alexander Prokhorov, 42-47 (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Russian Film Symposium, 2001); "Beskonechnost' Marlena Khutsieva: Kruglyi stol v redaktsii *Kinovedcheskikh zapisok*," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 14 (1992): 5-26; Kseniia Kurbatova, "Vremia v obraznoi strukture fil'ma Marlena Khutsieva *Zastava Il'icha*," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 68 (2004): 237-63; A. A. Levandovskii, "Posledniaia zastava: Fil'my Marlena Khutsieva *Zastava Il'icha* i *Iiulskii dozhd'* kak istochnik dlia izucheniia ischezaiushchei mental'nosti," in *Istoriia strany, istoriia kino*, ed. S. S. Sekirinskii (Moscow: Znak, 2004), 240-63; and Mark Zak, "Zastava Il'icha," in *Rossiiskii illiuzion*, ed. L. M. Budiak, (Moscow: Materik, 2003), 351-56.

subversion at major political gatherings. In a meeting with 400 members of the artistic intelligentsia in the Kremlin's Sverdlov Hall in March 1963, Khrushchev vehemently objected to the fact that the film portrayed the father as incapable of guiding his son. The following commentary reflected this unequivocal sentiment: "Will anyone believe that a father would not answer his son's question and wouldn't help him by advising him how to find the right path in life? . . . The idea [of the scene] is to impress upon the children that their fathers cannot be teachers in life, and that there is no point in turning to them for advice."[2] Although Khutsiev and others, such as veteran movie director M. Romm, tried to emphasize the movie's expressed faith in the young to forge their own path, Khrushchev remained insistent that this kind of portrayal of intergenerational relationships contradicted Soviet reality. He protested that the father-and-son problem was slanderous because "there are no divisions between generations in Soviet socialist society."[3] This phrase became a mantra repeated ad nauseam as a warning to other artists attempting to question the unbreakable bonds tying Soviet generations.

The regime considered depictions of generational dynamics fundamental not only to its domestic stability but also deemed it to be a crucial aspect of the Cold War. On June 18, 1963, only three months after Khrushchev had criticized *Lenin's Guard*, a Central Committee plenum yet again condemned the idea of generational conflict, describing the notion as patently anti-Soviet. In his opening speech, a CPSU Secretary in charge of propaganda and agitation, L. F. Il'ichev, argued that the "enemies of socialism" are exploiting the fictitious discord between "fathers and sons" to weaken the Communist Party's mandate to govern. He

[2] Priscilla Johnson, *Khrushchev and the Arts* (Cambridge: M.I.T Press, 1965), 154. For a full transcript of N. S. Khrushchev's speech at the March 8 meeting see Nikita Khrushchev see *Novyi mir* 6 (1963): 3-34.

[3] Ibid., 155.

pronounced: "Certain members of the intelligentsia . . . have taken up the fabricated generational conflict and began promoting it left and right, delighting our opponents. Our enemies think that the distorted representation of Soviet life will enable them to undermine the authority of party leaders . . . and popularize anarchism."[4] Not only were Soviet scriptwriters and directors committing an ideological sin by depicting generational conflict, but they were also supporting "the imperialist cause" by disseminating "rotten Trotskyite ideas about the moral degradation of the older generation."[5]

Khutsiev's scene incensed the top leadership because it negated the official line that the Soviet youth is inextricably tied to the state agenda and the older generations' historic experiences. Khrushchev's announcement at the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961 that "the present generation will live under communism" only intensified the party's insistence that the younger generation see its aspirations as inseparable from official dictates. Thus Sergei, as an incarnation of film heroes that appeared since 1953 and paved the way for his appearance, became a liability since he compromised the politically sacrosanct idea that the party led a unified people in a generational relay (*estafeta pokolenii*) whose finish line was communism. The baton Marx and Engels passed on to Lenin, and Lenin then entrusted to the Communist Party under Stalin's leadership, was now to be surrendered to young men who knew Lenin only as a historic personage and associated Stalin with the crimes he committed.

Thus Khutsiev's scene—however much it followed the spirit of de-Stalinization—provoked a strong reaction from Khrushchev because the young director struck at two myths central to Bolshevik rule. First, Khutsiev implied that the party elders, tainted as they were by association with the Stalinist regime, should allow a modicum of popular self-governance

[4] RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 635, l. 15.

[5] Ibid., l. 14.

and political autonomy. Second, by questioning the authority of the generation in power, Khutsiev put a question mark on the idea that men (should) define their gendered identity only when guided by a politically conscious father-figure and only within a collectivist homosocial context. Thus, the father-and-son dialogue in *Lenin's Guard* simultaneously undermined state-sponsored views on the hierarchical nature of Soviet authority and challenged official ideals about the formation of masculine identity.

Although Khutsiev's film represented a watershed moment in redefining post-Stalinist masculinity and its relation to political authority, it stemmed from a broader cinematic trend that had been critically reexamining the Stalin-era father-son trope since the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956.[6] This set of films struggled to find new ways of addressing the authoritarian principles that facilitated Stalin's personality cult and reign of terror. Since the masculine experience and male relationships acted as central tropes of the Stalinist regime, Thaw-era reformist filmmakers exploited the same masculine tropes but inverted them in order to destabilize the official myth that had enabled the Stalin-era tyranny: the myth of "the great Soviet family."[7]

This reductive myth, which identified the party apparatus and Stalin as the exclusive producers and guardians of totalizing truths, acted as the structuring logic for Stalinist culture in general and films in particular. Stalinist cinema promoted this patriarchal worldview by

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[6] Some examples of this trend are: *The Big Family* (Bol'shaia sem'ia, 1954), *Two Fedors* (Dva Fedora, 1958), *Fate of a Man* (Sud'ba cheloveka, 1959), *Waiting for the Mail* (Zhdite pisem, 1960), *They Were Nineteen* (Im bylo deviatnadtsat', 1960), *Heirs* (Nasledniki, 1960), *When Trees Were Big* (Kogda derev'ia byli bol'shimi, 1961), *And What If It's Love*?(A esli eto liubov'?, 1961), *My Friend Kol'ka* (Moi drug Kol'ka, 1961), *Ivan's Childhood* (Ivanovo detstvo, 1962), *Two Men* (My, dvoe muzhchin, 1962), *A Ruined Summer* (Propalo leto, 1963), *Welcome, or Entry Forbidden to Outsiders* (Dobro pozhalovat', ili postoronnim vkhod vospreshchen, 1964), *The Children of Don Quixote* (Deti Don-Kikhota, 1965), *Someone's Ringing, Open the Door!* (Zvoniat, otkroite dver'!, 1965), *Our home* (Nash dom, 1965), *A Man-to-Man Conversation* (Muzhskoi razgovor, 1968), and *We'll Survive Till Monday* (Dozhivem do ponedel'nika, 1968).

[7] Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 114-35.

featuring hardened, hypermasculine heroes whose initiation into the national body was directly tied to their obedience to an older, politically conscious father figure.[8] The simultaneous processes of achieving political maturity and realizing one's masculinity thus involved obeying hierarchy, becoming an unwavering champion of collective interests, and achieving victory in Stalin's name. This vision of a masculine and, by extension, national collective imagined Soviet citizens as dependent on the infallible leadership of the party elders and ensured a clear socio-political division between those who produced knowledge and others who internalized it, i.e. between the wise fathers and their dutiful progeny. Hardly a nation of equals, the "great Soviet family" reserved its validation for men who followed the lead of their elders to willingly sacrifice themselves whenever necessary.

Prompted by Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's personality cult, reformist directors began depicting more democratic relationships between men and sometimes inverted the hierarchical dynamics, making the progeny as wise (if not wiser than) the elders.[9] No longer did celluloid heroes attain membership in the Soviet collective by dutifully following the lead of a politically conscious mentor.[10] Rather, the relationship between

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[8] Peter Kenez identifies three films—S. Eisenstein's *Bezhin Meadows* (1937), M. A. Barskaia's *Father and Son* (1937), and A. Stolper's *The Law of Life* (1940)—whose censorship caused a long and widely publicized humiliation campaign against the aforementioned filmmakers. Although these films were denounced for the catch-all indictment of "formalism" and defamation of Soviet realities, all three also featured highly problematic father figures and role models. Unlike officially sanctioned motion pictures, these movies portrayed unharmonious relationships between authority figures and their charges, challenging the sanctity of the great Soviet family myth. See Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 134-40.

[9] At the Twentieth Party Congress Khrushchev stated "it is impermissible and foreign to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism to elevate one person, to transform him into a superman possessing supernatural characteristics, akin to those of a god." See N. S. Khrushchev, *The Crimes of the Stalin Era: Special Report to the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU* (New York: The New Leader Publishing, 1962), 3.

[10] Katerina Clark observes that in post-Stalinist literature previously central role of the mentor became increasingly problematic. She notes: "But 1956 saw such sweeping denunciations of the old father figure that it was really incumbent on writers to employ positive heroes untainted by close ties to him (a reason in itself, incidentally, for using younger heroes." Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 226.

generations became more egalitarian and on occasion younger protagonists, like Sergei, achieved consciousness independently.

The three Thaw-era films examined in this chapter trace the (d)evolution of the father-son trope in the Khrushchev era with the aim of identifying the precursors to the iconic scene that Khrushchev so thoroughly demonized. Each of the films denotes a fault line that marked a noticeable revision of the Stalinist myth of the great Soviet family. *Little Sergei* (Serezha) in 1960, *Clear Skies* (Chistoe Nebo) in 1961, and, finally, *Lenin's Guard* in 1962 represent the variety of ways reformist directors tackled the father-son trope in the post-Stalinist context. Although Khutsiev built his film on both the popular success and official recognition of *Little Sergei* and *Clear Skies*, its take on generational relations in the Soviet context outstretched the limits of the party's tolerance for ideological revisionism. Nonetheless, *Lenin's Guard* and its iconic scene symbolized the reformist intelligentsia's crossing of the Rubicon.

Reframing the "Fathers and Sons" Myth in Movies about Childhood

After the excesses of Stalinism, motion pictures about children, their trials and tribulations, abounded throughout the Thaw period; these productions embodied the spirit of the changing times and acted as symbols of de-Stalinization, possibilities of a more innocent future, and shifting relations between adults and children. Moviemakers often cast young protagonists as heroes who could cleanse the Soviet polity by their spontaneous energy, their youthful enthusiasm, and their unreserved candor.[11] All these movies focused on the lives of

[11] *Vasek Trubachev and His Pals* (Vasek Trubachev i ego tovarishchi, 1955), *On Imperial Ruins* (Na grafskikh razvalinakh, 1957), *Two Feodors* (Dva Fedora, 1958), *Little Andrei* (Andreika, 1958), *Brothers Komarov* (Brat'ia Komarovy, 1961), *Two Men Like Us* (My, dvoe muzhchin, 1961), *My Friend Kol'ka* (Moi drug Kol'ka,1961), *A Girl I Was Friends With* (Devchonka, s kotoroi ia druzhil, 1961), *Merry Tales* (Veselye

Soviet youth and their perceptions of the world around them. These movies were not hagiographic stories about exemplary Soviet youth, but rather narratives about people *in the making*. These movies focus on the slow and oft painful maturation of main heroes. But despite the imperfections of the adolescent protagonists, it was generally adults who were found wanting. The youth served as a kind of a corrective force in their lives, making the adults around them uncorrupted and more genuine.

Not an isolated phenomenon, these movies reflected a culture that became increasingly focused on the children's vantage point. Motion pictures celebrated childhood as expressively as did one of the most significant architectural undertakings of the period: the Pioneer Palace. The construction of the complex in Moscow's Lenin Hills began in 1958 and was completed in 1962. The palace and the grounds that surrounded it were staggering in size; the palace, set in 56 hectares (approximately 140 acres) of park was twice the area of the Kremlin.[12] The ideas that underpinned the construction of this complex were tied to the process of de-Stalinization. Susan Reid comments that: "the Pioneer Palace had the symbolic task of identifying Khrushchevism inextricably with the rejuvenation of the socialist project and the realization of the happy future through communist education, social and technological progress, and aesthetic modernization."[13] Moreover, the enthusiasm for this modernist compound was shared by the party, Komsomol organizations, and the reformist

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istorii, 1962), *Little Pavel* (Pavlukha, 1962), *Ivan's Childhood* (Ivanovo detstvo, 1962), *Fearless and Blameless* (Bez strakha i upreka, 1963), *Welcome, or Entry Forbidden to Outsiders* (Dobro pozhalovat', ili postoronnim vkhod vospreshchen, 1964), *Someone's Ringing, Open the Door!* (Zvoniat, otkroite dver'!, 1965), *A Little Girl and Echo* (Devochka i ekho, 1965)*The Sky of Our Childhood* (Nebo nashego detstva, 1966), *A Small Fugitive* (Malen'kiii beglets, 1966), and *A Girl on a Ball* (Devochka na share, 1966).

[12] Susan E. Reid *Khrushchev in Wonderland: The Pioneer Palace in Moscow's Lenin Hills, 1962*, Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, no. 1606 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 2.

[13] Ibid.

intelligentsia alike. The complex as a whole lay bare a perception of childhood as a distinct and especially happy condition, "essentially *different* from adulthood."[14]

The filmmakers readily resorted to adolescent and pre-adolescent heroes because, as film critic A. Volkov succinctly argues: "'Childhood issues' in so-called 'youth films' were employed continually as a cover for illustrating problems characteristic of the society as a whole. [15] Narratives that highlighted social problems but featured lovable protagonists sporting flip-flops, shorts, and sandals alarmed the censors less and had an easier time reaching the screens. Yet these young protagonists became a cultural phenomenon not only due to the political machinations on the part of the reformist intelligentsia, but also because the authorities saw children as a suitable symbol for the period, which in many ways represented a renaissance for the communist movement at home and abroad. Many directors thus took advantage of the official legitimization of childhood as a unique stage of human development to offer thought-provoking critiques about the country's socio-political system.

These motion pictures drew on the children's universe to express a philosophical stance toward the way adults could and should conduct themselves to achieve a more equitable social order. The 1958 production *Two Fedors* (Dva Fedora) and the famous 1959 motion picture *Fate of a Man* (Sud'ba cheloveka) both feature men who adopt orphaned boys after World War II. Both men are former Soviet soldiers who lost their families and feel disoriented in the postwar environment. In both scenarios egalitarianism marks the relationship between the men and boys; the fathers search for a sense of purpose as much as the sons need care and protection. They embrace each other as partners and their conversations reflect their parity.

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[14] Ibid.

[15] A. M. Budiak ed., *Rossiiskii illiuzion* (Moscow: Materik, 2003), 357.

Other movies of the period, however, showed the extent to which adults—especially those responsible for raising Soviet youth—grew cynical and mistrustful of their charges. Iulii Raizman's 1961 movie *And What If It's Love*?, for example, examines how adults (both parents and educators), could mistake an innocent relationship, such as a budding love between two teenagers, as a sexual and immoral affair, and even mistake it for a sign of how morally bankrupt the youth had become. The suspiciousness of the grown-ups eventually leads the heroine of the movie to poison herself. Raizman's production, which critics dubbed the "Soviet Romeo and Juliette," cast serious doubt on the ability of the adult collective to reach appropriate decisions regarding the upbringing of the generation that was supposed to usher in communism. Stanislav Rostotskii's film *We'll Survive Till Monday* (Dozhivem do ponedel'nika), voted as the best movie by readers of *Soviet Screen* (Sovetskii ekran) for 1968, also cast the pedagogues as far more wayward and alienated than their students. The youth might be lost about how to live their lives, but is, by and large, much more open, honest, and direct about their confusion. The adults, on the other hand, hide their fears under the cloak of experience and knowledge, sometimes to the point of discouraging youthful optimism.

To fully appreciate the immensity of the mentality shift facilitated by the Thaw-era focus on minors and youth, it is necessary to consider the deep roots of the "great Soviet family" myth. The philosophical reversal that placed children as visionaries and guardians of collective truths represented a profound attitudinal reversal because Russia's patriarchal legacy reached deep into the imperial past. Borrowing on tsarist legacy and the image of the tsar as the father of his people, the Soviet imagined community centered itself around a father-figure who benevolently guided his offspring. Both V. I. Lenin and Stalin took on the

role of supreme guardian of their "offspring." These were not merely symbolic roles; they were key to how social and political authority functioned in Soviet life. The iconic relationship between fathers and sons, having gained a literary embodiment in I. Turgenev's famous 1862 novel *Fathers and Sons*, was a key ideological and social issue for both the imperial and Soviet regimes. The Soviet system, as much as its imperial predecessor, utilized the paternal/patriarchal, symbolism and vocabulary to propagate a societal and political order that would be based on unambiguous hierarchy.

Although the Communist Party had ambitious plans to modify and eventually eliminate families from Soviet life as remnants of the petit-bourgeois past, by the early 1930s it had become clear that, rather than being the state's enemy, the family was to play a seminal role in furthering the state's involvement in individual lives. The family was allowed to survive only under the condition that family members become agents of the state. The foremost Soviet pedagogue A. Makarenko explained the state's relationship to the family unit: "The family is the primary cell of society, and its duties in childrearing derive from its obligations to produce good citizens."[16] Unlike its tsarist predecessor, the Soviet state no longer depended on individual patriarchs to legitimize its rule. Instead, the authorities became the ultimate arbiter of family affairs and as such became the most powerful socializing agent for young Soviet citizens. This drive required depriving individual patriarchs of their sociopolitical capital: their families.[17] The state's push to bolster women's sociopolitical position, however contradictory and uneven, gave Soviet women opportunities

[16] A. Makarenko, "Kniga dlia roditelei," *Krasnaia nov'* no. 7 (July 1937): 15, quoted in Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual*, 3rd ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press), 115.

[17] Sergei Kukhterin, "Fathers and Patriarchs in Communist and Post-Communist Russia," in *Gender, State, and Society in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. Sarah Ashwin (New York: Routledge, 2000), 71-89.

to work, providing them with skills and an income, and at the same time protected their marriage/divorce rights. In taking over functions previously performed by the *pater familias*, the state thus became the supreme patriarch. Catriona Kelly's research points to the supplicant position children came to embody by the mid-1930s: "Children had become quintessential beneficiaries, and petitioners, of the Soviet state, which could, like a stern parent choose to withhold rewards and mete out punishment if it so chose."[18] The docility that defined childhood was also expected of adults; Stalinist propaganda set the expectation that grown-ups also adopt a filial and uncritical stance toward supreme authority.[19] The propaganda machine often represented the expected submissiveness and passivity by propagating images of a beribboned small girls presenting the heads of state with flower bouquets.[20]

Perhaps no one incident exemplifies this new relationship more clearly than the legend about the young pioneer Pavel Morozov. In 1932 the young boy had allegedly turned in his father for forging sought-after documents granting permission to travel. According to the official account, Pavlik had stood up in court and said: "Uncle Judge, I'm acting not as a son but as a Pioneer! And I say: my father is betraying the cause of October!"[21] According to the story, once the father's relatives found out about the child's actions they killed him but were arrested and executed. In many ways the mythology surrounding Pavlik Morozov became significant not only because every Soviet child knew his story by heart, but also for

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[18] Catriona Kelly, *Children's World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991* (New Heaven: Princeton University Press, 2007), 105.

[19] Ibid., 110-11.

[20] Ibid., 153.

[21] For the truth and fiction behind Morozov see Catriona Kelly, *Comrade Pavlik: The Rise and Fall of a Soviet Boy Hero* **(**London: Granta, 2005).

the moral lesson it taught: blood ties should be rejected in favor of political ones. The patriarch, the old *pater familias*, was deposed and the ideologically-centered relationships became the key orienting factor for young men and boys. Thus, although Soviet authorities attempted to neutralize the power of the individual patriarch, it made patriarchal principles the cornerstone of its own authority. The Soviet Union became a metaphorical extended family. Unsurprisingly, Stalin filled the role of the supreme father and the relationships he fostered with his sons could be imitated and emulated in various aspects of everyday Soviet life.[22]

The restrictive hierarchical social structure played such a prominent position in Stalinist dogma that it became one of the first casualties of de-Stalinization. Once reformist directors began examining questions of authority and power from a child's point of view, the great Soviet family myth started to ring hollow; a child's spontaneity and sincerity replaced a grown-up's uniformity and conformity. The child-hero enabled directors to raise the kinds of critical questions they could not with protagonists played by adolescents or grown men because the appearance of spritely, mischievous boys often disarmed even the most orthodox censor. In the series of movies that imagine childhood as a state in which an individual perceives the world in unmediated and unadulterated ways, the film *Little Sergei* in many ways stands out as the prototype for this kind of cultural project. *Little Sergei* reflects the subtlety with which directors used children as heroes to comment on the day's most sensitive ideological issues. This motion picture is particularly poignant in portraying the relationship between the six-year-old Sergei and his new step father. The focus of the movie is their burgeoning relationship and ways in which the father and son are not so much at odds with

[22] On Stalin's image as a father figure in film, see Hans Günther, "Wise Father Stalin and His Family in Soviet Cinema," in *Socialist Realism without Shores*, ed. Thomas Lahusen and Evgeny Dobrenko (Duke University Press, 1997), 178-90.

each other, but nurture an interdependent relationship, giving each other opportunity and encouragement for further growth.

The blockbuster movie *Little Sergei* was a sign of rapidly changing times. It was the first instance in the history of Soviet cinema that a very young boy played the protagonist. It was this six-year-old who attracted approximately 23 million viewers to movie theaters, following the immense success of Vera Panova's 1955 novel of the same title. The memoir of the famed film critic Irina Shilova identifies one particular scene as expressing the quintessential spirit of the Thaw. In it, the little protagonist reprimands an older gentleman visitor for offering him an empty wrapper under the pretense of giving him actual candy. Sergei asks the guest: "Mister, are you a jackass (*durak*)?" Shilova comments that: "disregarding good etiquette, Sergei allowed himself to speak truthfully. . . . Honesty became the precondition for new relationships, a repudiation of lies and prejudice. The clarity of a child's *weltanschauung* represented a foundation upon which one so badly wanted to recommence the construction of a new Soviet man."[23]

This father-and-son story begins under skies of light blue, between lush meadows and along an unpaved village road. There, in that untarnished rural environment, lives a six-year-old boy by the name of Serezha. His honesty is captivating; his feelings unexplored but true; and his innocence charming. *Little Sergei* first captured the attention of Soviet audiences in 1956 when Vera Panova's novella compellingly narrated several episodes from the life of this very small boy. Filmmakers G. Daneliia and I. Talankin, both of whom received their diplomas from the State Institute of Cinematography in 1959, created an equally captivating childhood on the screen by employing Panova's script adaptation. The two directors captured

[23] I. Shilova, *I moe kino: piatidesiatye, shestidesiatye, semidesiatye* (Moscow: Kinovedcheskie zapiski, 1993), 58.

the world "from below," applying both innovative cinematography and imaginative dialogue. The movie, much like the novella, proved popular with both audiences and critics alike. Critic M. Kuznetsov commented that: "we can see, once again, all that surrounds us with a feeling of freshness, the initial sparkle that accompanied our discovery of the world, and this sensation does not leave us throughout the movie."[24]

The film opens with Serezha exclaiming, "I have a heart," as he tries to get the attention of his two older neighbors. This simple and straightforward declamation leaves the two neighbors unaffected but the audiences suffer the first tender assault of the six-year-old charmer. His sincere smile, his untidy blond hair, his attentive eyes, his carefree movements demand full surrender. Daneliia and Talankin maneuver camera angles adroitly so the viewer always has the benefit of the child's perspective that allows for suspension of disbelief and gives full credence to his developing worldview. Close-up shots of farm animals, panoramic shots of an endless horizon dotted with figurines of children, and the view of adults from ground level all permit a view of a grown-up world in which children appropriate a small corner from which they weave their influence.

Critics commented that one of the few shortcomings of the movie was the unconvincing portrayal of adults. Serezha, together with his neighborhood buddies Zhenya, Lidka, Shurik, and Vas'ka answer life's large questions in a much more compelling manner than grown-ups address their daily concerns. Reviewer M. Kuznetsov considered the dramatic quality of the movie distinctive in that it is "transferred to the inside," to the depth of the child's soul.[25] Soviet literary commentators were generally quick to mention terms such as spirit, soul, and character, pairing them with verbs that imply formation, cultivation,

[24] M. Kuznetsov, "Zhil-bil mal'chik," *Iskusstvo Kino* 7 (1960): 28.

[25] Ibid., 29.

and construction, ready to launch into a fervent discussion about the impending Communist epoch. Serezha's demeanor and actions disclose in him a man of the future, who will travel safely and confidently on the road to communism by "being receptive to all that is beautiful, intelligent, rightful, and benevolent."[26]

The space that the children occupy in Soviet ideology thus becomes paramount; these are the future builders of communism. For this undertaking they are in need of examples that will form their character so they might recognize the value of tomorrow in the present. Throughout the film, mothers, aunts, and other female villagers prove to be either passive or inefficient exemplars of upstanding behavior. Serezha's own worldview begins to expand once his mother tells him that he will have a father again. The new father figure represents the true beginning of the movie and allows for a singularly intimate look into how Soviet masculinity is forged.

Before Serezha's stepfather, Korostelev, arrives to his new family, Serezha composes various scenarios about the character of the newcomer from gossip, household commentaries, and other events that foreshadow his arrival. The older neighborhood kids inform him that Korostelev is the chairman of the local kolkhoz. A single suitcase and a hefty bundle of books are delivered as Serezha overhears a village woman telling his grandmother that the little boy certainly needs a father and concludes that "someone needs to apply the belt after all." These small clues collectively sketch out a studious, stern, responsible party man who subscribes to the 1920s revolutionary ideals of asceticism. As he beholds the new family member, Serezha casts a skeptical and fearful glance.

As timidity quickly transforms into curiosity, little Sergei, mimicking Korostelev's actions, asks him whether he will beat him with a belt if he misbehaves. Korostelev takes the

[26] N. Ignat'eva, "Serezha," *Sovetskii ekran* 13 (1960): 12.

boy's casually spoken apprehensions seriously, wanting them to come to an understanding "man to man." The accomplished collective farm chairman symbolically shares a smaller chair as he speaks with his stepson. By addressing Sergei on equal footing Korostelev literally and figuratively creates an unaffected foundation for a common language that benefits both in the long run. Sergei's masculine role-model demonstrates that power is not about punishment but about dialogue. Unlike Stalinist father-and-son relationships, the Khrushchevian extended family is conditioned by mutual support and understanding. At the end of the conversation Serezha is promised a bicycle, which begins a series of novelties Korosetelev brings into his life.

Besides bicycles, bus rides, stuffed monkeys, and eventually a baby brother, Korostelev also affords his stepson with life's small but crucial lessons. When a male visitor gives Serezha a piece of candy that turns out to be an empty wrapper, little Sergei matter-of-factly calls the guest a jackass. His mother Mar'iana demands an apology and, upon not receiving it promptly, grounds him for the remainder of the day. When Korostelev arrives home later that evening, he good-humoredly disagrees with his wife's reaction, amused that the boy had called the fool by his proper name. The stepfather sides with his stepson's reaction terming his response as justified criticism (*spravedlivaia kritika*). Overhearing this, Serezha falls asleep contented, sure of his future behavior.

Korostelev possesses parenting techniques that benefit Sergei because of his instinctive feeling for what masculine qualities are necessary for success in Soviet society. By approving of Serezha's actions, Korostelev censures Mar'iana's stress on the primacy of proper behavior over justified criticism since that would deny Serezha his authentic voice. As a conscientious man, Korostelev wants Serezha to rebuke anyone who demonstrates

unprincipled behavior. Minding one's manners in such circumstances would achieve nothing but decorum, and since a communist man is one of vision, he is aware that widespread acceptance of decorum's status quo impedes revolutionary pace. Serezha might not have the vision at that moment, but Korostelev provides him with the tools and authorization to achieve it. At the same time, although this moment builds a stronger, more open relationship between step-father and his charge, it diminishes the automatic respect for authority figures in general. A far cry from stories about Pavlik Morozov. Even though Pavlik's central goal was to serve justice, his sense of right and wrong was strictly moderated by party dictums. Contrastingly, Serezha's ethics were directed by his own innate sense of right and wrong.

Korostelev not only gives Serezha courage to express himself, but also sets an example. As he follows his stepfather through the kolkhoz, Serezha witnesses his stepfather effectively performing demanding tasks. Korostelev, who appears on the news because of his kolkhoz's explosive production rates, however, is no longer the superhero of Stalinist days. He is driven but not unreasonable. He is at the same time sensible and sensitive, warm but impartial, amicable but demanding. He denies himself sleep and meals but still manages to provide for the happiness of his family, giving both material goods and tender affection. As Serezha falls asleep on a couch in a conference room where his stepfather is meeting with a group of admiring workers, he comments to himself: "Of course he cannot eat. What would they do without him? When I grow up I'd like to become a kolkhoz chairman." Korostelev teaches Sergei the importance of communicating clearly and patiently, encourages him to speak his mind, supports him in employing justifiable criticism when necessary, and demonstrates that it is important to earn both the respect of co-workers and the affection of

family members. All these traits represent identity markers of post-Stalinist masculinity. Korostelev proves to be a judicious teacher and Serezha an apt pupil.

The stepfather, however, also benefits from his stepson's example. As preparations to move to the city of Kholmogorod are underway, Serezha comes down with a fever and the adults decide to leave him behind until he recovers. Serezha is devastated and Korostelev tries reasoning with him, explaining the concept of duty and obligation (*Est' takoe slovo—nado*). The boy grasps the meaning of his stepfather's message because he has seen him living this very lesson at the kolkhoz. He respects and abides by his stepfather's wish and gives his word of honor (his manly word—*muzhskoe slovo*) that he will be brave and patient until they return for him. Little Sergei cannot, however, stop what he was doing all along—remaining faithful to the drumbeats of his heart. As the truck begins to pull away, Sergei turns away, head bowed and eyes in tears. Suddenly, with a tearful face, Korostelev shouts out to Serezha to collect his things and climb into the truck. As the mother protests the decision, Korostelev resolutely responds that he simply cannot leave the boy behind. As a kolkhoz chairman he has learned to approach the needs of individuals with tact and balance those with societal demands. Serezha has taught him not only to listen to the voices of others, but to heed his own heart as well.

As the film closes, a jubilant Sergei sits next to his stepfather en route to Kholmogorod. His trip is made possible by Korostelev's ability to recognize the difference between the weighty "must," which guides the dutiful actions within the collective, and the drumbeats of the heart that that give personal experiences value and meaning. Korostelev thus becomes the masculine paradigm of the early Khrushchev era since he skillfully manages to satisfy his family's material needs while practicing the virtues of humility and

modesty. As such, he, rather than Mar'iana, represents the optimal example for Sergei. In the end, it is clear that neither Korostelev nor Sergei could have developed without each other's mutual influence; the development of one is conditioned by the presence of the other.

For this reason it is perhaps no coincidence that Pavel Morozov's statue was not present in Khrushchev's Pioneer Palace at its opening. His image, though certainly not prohibited, was apparently out of touch with the day's views on both family and authority dynamics within in. Sergei proved appealing for his ability to speak plainly and question the world around him openly. Pavlik, on the other hand, had been admired for the fact that he acted obediently, following proscribed norms given to him by his elders. Korostelev's authority drew its legitimacy from dialogue and his willingness to listen while the authority of Stalinist father-figures forbade independent inquiry and demanded deference. The relationship between Korostelev and Sergei thus embodied a microcosm of Thaw-era mores. No longer did the state represent the ultimate arbiter of right and wrong. The father and son came to an understanding jointly in private, intimate, and idiosyncratic ways.

The Unmaking of the "Fathers and Sons" Myth

Whereas *Little Sergei* inverted the great Soviet family myth by endorsing the child-hero as a necessary corrective to previously unfaultable adult authority, Grigorii Chukhrai's 1961 feature *Clear Skies* struck at the very core of patriarchal authority: the trope of Stalin as the "Father of the Peoples" (*otets narodov*). Chukhrai accomplished this by demystifying and dethroning aviators—Stalin's "model sons"—as the embodiment of Soviet masculinity. By demonstrating how Stalin's paranoia coldheartedly ruined the life of the system's most hallowed figure—a decorated pilot and war hero—Chukhrai effectively undermined both

Stalin's fatherly aura and exposed the hollowness surrounding the Stalin-era aviator cult. As a result, both the Great Leader and his "model sons" lost their ethereal quality. Like Toto in *The Wizard of Oz*, Chukhrai pulled back the curtain on Stalinist mythology to reveal the Wizard to be a mere mortal propped up by an artificial (ideological) edifice. Soviet audiences and officials reveled in Chukhrai's audacious "outing" of the so-called Gardener of Human Happiness. Not only did the readers of the movie magazine *Soviet Screen* vote *Clear Skies* as the "Best Film of the Year" in 1961, but it also won international recognition and official blessings from Soviet authorities when it received the Golden Star award during the Moscow Film Festival. Moreover, the motion picture sold approximately 42 million tickets at home and received wide distribution abroad.

More than a denunciation of Stalin's terror, the film raised questions about how power functions in a socialist context and how men relate to the authority of the collective. Whereas the Stalin-era aviators readily internalized the supremacy of the collective and the patriarch, Chukhrai's protagonist becomes a man only after shaking off his subservient position. To appreciate this shift fully, I will compare Chukhrai's film to another officially and popularly acclaimed production that premiered in 1948: Aleksandr Stolper's *The Story of a Real Man* (*Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke*). The movie is based on the actual exploits of Aleksei Petrovich Mares'ev who became famous throughout the Soviet Union after Boris Polevoi penned an account of the pilot's fate in the journal *Oktiabr'* in 1946. Polevoi's story won the Stalin Prize and Stolper subsequently made the award-winning narrative into a movie in 1948. The film, which also won a Stalin Prize, was the second most popular movie of 1948, selling nearly 35 million tickets.

Both *Clear Skies* and *The Story of a Real Man* capitalize on pilots as privileged gendered tropes to relate specific expectations for Soviet masculinity in a socialist society. Jay Bergman and Katerina Clark identify Stalinist pilots in general, and Valerii Chkalov in particular, as prototypical archetypes of Stalinist masculinity who could always count on their (largely symbolic but very much unavoidable) "conscious fathers" for help and guidance. Chkalov, in his many heroic incarnations—the conqueror of Nature, the defender of Soviet borders from foreign foes, and the military explorer extraordinaire—was ultimately but a son to the Father of the Peoples. Despite his Herculean achievements, the nation's flying aces were firstly and foremostly obedient sons. As such, they modeled a type of masculinity that was tempered not by steel but by fatherly attention. Stalin was not only the symbolical caretaker, but was also central to the lives of these pilots since his mature, paternal consciousness steadied the sons' youthful spontaneity and allowed them to achieve their potential.[27] Although both Chukhrai and Stolper draw on the cult surrounding Stalin's "hawks," they utilize Soviet Union's "airborne heroes" to very different ends: Stolper affirms the sanctity of the great Soviet family myth while Chukhrai dismantles the structure supporting the very same patriarchal system. At the height of Stalin's personality cult, Stolper's film outlined the organic connection men shared in the extended national family through an ever-wise, all-knowing father. Chukhrai subverted this logic only thirteen years later, positing that individual will, guided by correct intentions, overrides allegiance to the group.

[27] As Clark mentions, Stalin was never short on the affection he generously showered on his "pets" (*pitomtsi*). In a short story about pilots entitled "The Teacher and the Students," Stalin was said to have exuded "fatherly warmth" whenever he met the pilots. A 1937 editorial in *Literaturnaia gazeta* went so far as to imply that Stalin's "warmth," potent as it was, could protect the pilots against the Arctic temperatures. The fatherly concern was even displayed in Stalin's actions: he would see off the pilots before their flights, welcome them back, and if one of the pilots died, Stalin would serve as his pallbearer. See, Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, 126-27, and Jay Bergman, "Valerii Chkalov: Soviet Pilot as New Soviet Man," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no.1 (1998): 135-52.

Both stories feature air force pilots who overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles in order to return to flying planes. The two men, however, attain their goals in starkly different ways. While Stolper's hero succeeds because his older brethren-in-arms give him unconditional assistance, Chukhrai's protagonist triumphs because he courageously stands up to the revered wisdom of his elders without the support of the collective. *The Story of a Real Man* celebrates the transformative influence of authority figures and extols the inviolability of collective wisdom while *Clear Skies* privileges man's individual autonomy to the detriment of communal will.

Mares'ev's story begins with his plane being shot down behind enemy lines in March 1942. Since the crash badly wounds his legs, he spends the following eighteen (!) days crawling back toward Soviet-held territories, fighting off the elements, hunger, predatory animals, and the Fascists. Eventually saved by the Soviet partisans, he is taken to a hospital, where surgeons amputate both of his gangrenous legs. In Polevoi's description, Mares'ev becomes so entirely demoralized, that he begins to feel he cannot continue living since he cannot imagine his life without flying. As Polevoi states: "All his life's goals, all his worries and joys, all his plans for the future, and all his present life's achievements—all of it was tied to aviation."[28] After the surgery, Polevoi comments that "even though his iron-clad organism easily adapted after a masterfully performed amputation and though the wounds were quickly healing, he was noticeably weakening; despite all the measures taken, he was wasting away from day to day for all to see."[29] Central to Mares'ev's mental and physical recovery was his bedside neighbor Semen Petrovich Vorob'ev—affectionately but appropriately nicknamed "Commissar"—whom a *Pravda* review described as "an old Bolshevik, an old propagandist,

[28] Boris Polevoi, *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1949), 26.

[29] Ibid.

an architect of human souls."[30] The Commissar left a deep impression on not only Mares'ev but also on all the men with whom he came in contact. Once the experienced Civil War veteran moved into room forty-two, he quickly became popular with everyone there. His seemingly endless dynamism and positive energy proved contagious. Polevoi's account avers that "the pilot could not understand how this man could ignore such staggering pain, and where all his energy, vivacity, and vitality came from."[31] After Mares'ev's surgery the Commissar proves central to the recuperation of his younger "brother-in-arms," taking up the role of the wise and benevolent father.

With the help of the collective, the old Bolshevik gives Mares'ev many examples of men who had achieved great things despite their physical handicaps. The Commissar had Nikolai Ostrovskii's 1932 novel *How the Steel Was Tempered* (Kak zakalialas' stal') delivered to the room, and read out loud how the protagonist, Pavel Korchagin, fought until he became blind and died. Although the pilot admired Korchagin since childhood, he dismisses this example as irrelevant to his situation, arguing: "But after all, Korchagin was not a pilot; how would he understand what it means to "catch the flying fever" (*zabolet' vozdukhom*)? No matter how many personal acquaintances with various handicaps his fellow-patients enumerate, Mares'ev's attitude could be summed up in the celluloid hero's retort: "one can think, speak, write, command, heal, even hunt without legs, but one cannot be a pilot." Heeding this young soldier's concerns, the Commissar brings Mares'ev an article about V. A. Karpovich, an imperial-era pilot whose foot was shot off during combat. Karpovich's story was unusual in that he devised his own prosthetics and trained until he was able to return to flying combat planes, eventually earning the order of St. George, Imperial

[30] P. Pavlenko, "Poema o sovetskom cheloveke," *Pravda*, November 23, 1948, p. 3.

[31] Polevoi, *Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke*, 27.

Russia's highest military distinction. After reading the article, the Commissar and Mares'ev discuss Karpovich's feat:

> "But he only lost a foot!" objected Mares'ev.
> "But you are a *Soviet* man!" confidently pronounced the Commissar.
> "But he flew a biplane! Can we even call it a plane? Who couldn't fly it? Its mechanics are such that it requires neither dexterity nor skill."
> "But you are a *Soviet* man!" insisted the Commissar.
> "A *Soviet* man!" automatically repeated Aleksey, not taking his sight off the article.

As Semen Petrovich grew weaker, having brought a sense of meaning and purpose to the young man's life, his charge became stronger and healthier, exercising and training daily in his bed. Soon after the former flying ace almost fully recuperates, the Commissar dies and leaves Aleksei to fend for himself, but arms him with sage advice: those who cower during difficult times will perish while those who fight the odds will always prevail. Before dying, Mares'ev's mentor orders a pair of prosthetic legs to help his charge realize his Soviet greatness. As the funeral cortege passes underneath the hospital windows, a new patient, amazed by the long lines of people following the Commissar's casket, asks: "Who died? A general or another notable?" To this Mares'ev turns to the camera and with great pathos pronounces: "A Bolshevik. A real man."

The relationship between Semen Petrovich and Aleksei exemplifies the model relationship between father and son. Aleksei is characterized by great virility and enthusiasm but also by a degree of emotional immaturity. His emotiveness and lack of ideological consciousness is therefore compensated by the guidance of an affectionate father-figure who, having seen and experienced more, has a higher degree of ideological consciousness. The son does not even need to ask for guidance from his father; instead, the father intuits the son's needs, providing timely direction and guidance. The *Pravda* review praises actor N. Okhlopkov as having succeeded in portraying "a powerful, inspiring image of a Communist,

for whom living means to teach, to motivate, and to lead forward."[32] Moreover, after his death the mentor continued to live on in the lessons he taught his young protégée.

Thus, in a sense, the title of both B. Polevoi's account and Stolper's movie is not just about a single "real man," one hero. It is about the symbolic genealogical lineage of real Soviet men, who encourage and inspire each other to great feats in the name of the communal good. This point is underscored at the end of the movie when Mares'ev, having saved a young pilot from certain death, offers the soldier the same advice he was once given by the Commissar: only those who fight the odds will prevail. The *Pravda* analysis of the movie underscores this point by claiming:

> A new kind of people have been created. Thousands and thousands have grown up and matured; they're the kind of people compared to whose spiritual goodness and power the most exemplary heroes of the past cannot compare. Mares'ev is not a solitary figure. Right beside him other Soviet people discharge their duties because, like Mares'ev, they carry within them traits of real Soviet people and represent worthy sons of the Soviet nation. The movie *A Story of a Real Man* correctly demonstrates how the character of such people is constructed and shaped; this is its main merit.[33]

The review praised the movie for having constructed a society in which earnest and ceaseless effort is always rewarded. More importantly, it extolled a society in which an individual's strength—and even survival—is based on complying with the wisdom of those with a greater degree of authority.[34]

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[32] Pavlenko, "Poema o sovetskom cheloveke," 3.

[33] Ibid.

[34] These types of stories were not uncommon in the Soviet context. For example, on January 9, 1954, *Pravda* published a moving story on its opening page. The article, entitled "In Our Country Only Labor Makes Man Happy," relates an experience of a tractor driver, Vladimir Iarmol', who had come back to his village after the war as an invalid. The young soldier had lost a leg while bravely and selflessly defending his homeland. Upon returning, he was warmly welcomed by his neighbors, who did whatever they could to alleviate his unenviable position. Vladimir, however, was consumed by a single thought: how to find a place for himself in the Soviet collective so as to be most useful in the construction of a communist society. While Vladimir pondered his situation, he found out about a combine driver, Prokofii Nektov, who lost *both* of his legs during World War II but still managed to become one of the best combine operators in the country. Adopting Prokofii, an award-winning handicapped veteran, as a role model, Vladimir also became an exceptional tractor driver and

But, however reassuring this representation might have seemed in 1948, its success could not survive the Twentieth Party Congress, as Khrushchev decisively debased Stalin—whose authority and person these kinds of movies were supposed to celebrate. Instead, audiences and authorities alike extolled books, artwork, and films that either dealt with the deficiencies of the Stalinist past or celebrated the freedom of the de-Stalinized present. In 1961, Soviet movie director Grigorii N. Chukhrai decided to explore the contemporary issue of de-Stalinization through the life of a pilot.[35] Even in the wake of the Twentieth Party Congress, tackling Stalin's legacy remained a sensitive topic. Instead of filming what would have essentially been a continuation of the Stalinist myth of a pilot as a prodigious and yet humble servant of his fatherland, Chukhrai made a motion picture about a man who, *despite* the inequities of both the state and the Soviet collective, continued to believe in the virtues of communism. Aleksei Astakhov, the protagonist of Chukhrai's *Clear Skies*, succeeds not *because of* the father-figure or even Stalin himself but, to the contrary, *despite* the fact that Stalin and other party leaders were the source of his downfall. Chukhrai recalled the central idea behind the making of this film thusly:

> The new story line embodied all those things that we thought about intensely during those years. My generation's faith in Stalin was limitless. All the best things were tied to our Communist ideals and our fight for communism. We

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went on to over-fulfill projected norms. The correspondent commented that this example illustrated the three main qualities the Communist Party instilled in its citizens: a socialist attitude toward work, confidence in the victory of the exalted communal endeavor, and both the willingness and the ability to overcome any hardship.

[35] Script writer D. Ia. Khrabrovitskii initially envisioned this film to be about a test-pilot who broke the sound barrier. However, Chukhrai thought the movie was doomed after a consultation at the Zhukovskii Academy regarding the movie's accuracy vis-à-vis the technical aspect of breaking the sound barrier. In his memoirs, Chukhrai recalls that Professor Kitaigorodskii discouragingly asked whether the studio was filming a comedy. And when the director asked whether the mistakes can be corrected, the professor was decisively skeptical. He commented: "I can only tell you that everything in the script that concerns breaking the sound barrier does not have anything in common with reality. Nothing was as you describe it. Besides, we did not lead the race to break the sound barrier." Although Chukhrai almost abandoned the film, the crew working on the project and the studio's administration urged him to proceed with filming; otherwise the studio would not meet its yearly quota and the crew would not earn the money they were counting on. Thus the filming continued while the script, which was improvised from one scene to the next, changed dramatically.

> imagined Stalin, who was at the forefront of this struggle, to be absolutely honest and fair. Our disappointment in him was a terrible blow to us. But even this shock did not weaken our faith. Much like before, we remained true to our ideals and were ready to continue fighting for them.[36]

However transparent Chukhrai's faith in communism was, the movie itself raised more questions than it answered and most of those questions raised doubts about the capacity of the state to treat its citizens fairly. The specter of doubt began to haunt the USSR and struck at the myth of the "great Soviet family."

While on one of his missions, Astakhov's plane is shot down and he is captured by the Germans while unconscious. He survives the horrors of German prison camps and returns to his wife and child. His happiness, however, is not long-lasting. Because he was captured by the Fascists no one trusts him; he is suspected of having collaborated with the Germans as a POW. At the time, it was an accepted fact that enemy forces shot Soviet soldiers, especially Communists, upon capture. It followed that those who came back alive survived by collaborating. Slowly but surely the suspicion on the part of the collective costs Astakhov his job and his party membership. It is surprising that Astakhov, like many others of his background, does not end his days in the Gulag under suspicion of espionage. Astakhov, much like Mares'ev, loses a sense of purpose since he cannot fly; though he can stand on his own two feet, the suspicion of his comrades cripples him. Astakhov begins to drink and submissively accepts his fate. He is not only a victim of a paranoid system headed by a tyrant, but is also unaided by his fellow-Communists.

The legend of a "real Soviet man" and the myth of the "great Soviet family" run afoul in Chukhrai's version. Ironically, the only person supporting him is his wife Sasha, rather than an ideologically conscious male father-figure. She continues to encourage him, sincerely

[36] Grigorii Chukhrai, *Moe kino* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2002), 142.

believing in his innocence. Astakhov, however, believes in the righteousness of the collective and the party; he accepts the judgment of the collective and, in a self-critical fashion typical of the best of Communists, even manages to find himself partially accountable. The alienated pilot explains: "When trees are cut down, woodchips fly." (Kogda les rubiat shchepki letiat)[37] A great struggle is underway. It does not matter if one, two, ten, or hundreds of innocent people become victims. We should not feel sorry for anyone, not even ourselves, for the sake of this lofty goal." In a classic Stalinist-era fashion, the main hero renounces his own happiness for the good of the collective, firmly believing that the party, Stalin, and the Soviet collective would not ask for this sacrifice were it not completely necessary.

This ascetic attitude, however, changes after Astakhov has a falling out with his fellow factory worker and nephew Sergei. Astakhov encourages Sergei to aspire to loftier goals, to not only fulfill his production quota, but to also consider his more ideological ideals and aspirations. Sergei angrily replies: "I have thought about these things! But where is the justice you speak of? You keep lecturing me about heroism and morality while you yourself are a coward. . . . I was only a toddler when you were testing planes. I was proud of you—wanted to be just like Astakhov. And what happened? You're an apprentice, just like me. Even our salaries are nearly the same. So, please tell me where is this justice of yours?" Astakhov responds that, if he had to do things over, he would do everything in the same way. He reminds his nephew that for him communism is not just a pretty word but an ideal he lived and continues to live by. Sergei, however, persists, unconvinced by the ex-pilot's rehearsed platitudes: "I know you're a true Communist. But why aren't you a member of the party then?" As if on auto-pilot, the uncle responds: "If it's so, then it means it needs to be

[37] The closest equivalent of this Russian saying is "You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs."

this way." Finally, the nephew angrily demands: "Who needs it? She? I? Your son? The party? Or maybe the government for which you fought?" As if wounded, Astakhov grabs Sergei by the collar and screams: "Shut up!" Having heard the unspeakable truth, having heard that his suffering is for naught, Astakhov reconsiders his position in the ensuing scene.

Following this bitter altercation, Astakhov is beyond himself, having experienced a revelation. Sasha tells him to pay no heed to the young man's words; his youth is responsible for his brashness. Astakhov, however, is convinced that the boy is right; he avers that Sergei is "cleaner" than they are, almost mimicking the biblical "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings." Astakhov cries out in a dramatic tour de force: "Why are we lying to ourselves? What are we afraid to admit to ourselves?" With an air of explosive irritation he exclaims: ". . . this "When trees are cut down, woodchips fly!" Who, I ask you, who thought of this? Since when is human life disposable? Since when is vigilance equal to paranoia? I am a soldier, not a victim! I am a human being, damn it, and I deserve to know the truth." Armed with this manifesto Astakhov begins to collect his belongings, intending to go to Moscow and stay there for as long as it takes until his case, and those of others like him, are resolved. He realizes that his masculinity needs not be a sacrificial offering to the state, that he need not suffer endlessly to serve his country's great cause. Following Stalin's death, Astakhov goes to Moscow as he intended and is not only reinstated into the party's ranks but is also decorated with a military award. Most importantly for him, he is allowed to fly again. His spiritual resurrection follows the death of the Father. In an almost Freudian twist, Astakhov, the pilot, the favored son of the Stalinist period, can come to life in the post-Stalinist period only after the Father has passed on.

In a Houdiniesque maneuver, Chukhrai overturned the Stalinist myth of the "Great Family." Not only had the father-figure been absent during Astakhov's worst tribulations, but it was the son-figure, an adolescent, who brought about Astakhov's catharsis, which enabled him to see past his "defect" and travel to Moscow to reclaim his ideological credibility—and with it his ability to fly. By stressing his hero's unshakable faith, Chukhrai propagated a new kind of hero: one that fights for truth, rather than for the party. Having denounced Stalin and exposed his crimes, the party effectively surrendered its monopoly on truth and justice, if not ideologically than certainly practically. The post-Stalinist protagonists are thus committed to the ideal of justice defined by their own contexts and ideals rather than ones prescribed by party authorities.

The importance and meaning of this movie were not lost on some in the crew. Even before the movie was completed a member of the movie crew wrote a damning letter to the Ministry of Culture, claiming that the film "spat in the face of our party."[38] The Minister of Culture E. A. Furtseva came to view the movie and at the conclusion of the viewing, remarked: "Well, all of this is true, isn't it?" She also asked Chukhrai to make sure that the mistakes of the past do not appear to carry over into the present. The minister wanted to strategically sequester the sins of the past, the sins of the fathers, and quarantine them for good. But the movie demonstrated that memories cannot be held captive and that they are essential to the formation of future generations.

For this reason the movie evoked strong responses. On April 19, 1961, after a public showing of the movie and a subsequent discussion of it, the polarity of views created a charged atmosphere at the Central Cinema Hall. The internationally acclaimed movie scholar

[38] Ibid., 145.

and critic R. N. Iurenev unambiguously stated that "it was important to seriously and honestly discuss all that made my generation suffer, that hindered us from looking straight into our comrades' eyes, that made us not speak openly in both life and art."[39] A self-described "ordinary" viewer in the hall, Comrade Kushchev, on the other hand, could not accept Chukhrai's version of events. He objected: "I know what it was like in the past, but you could always find honest Communists who helped out. And here we have one man who receives no help from anyone for the duration of the entire movie! . . . We need to show the truth on the screen and show the other side of the coin as well: the times when people were helped, the times when people went the extra mile to exonerate an innocent man. What we saw in this movie does not fully reflect the fullness of our lived reality."[40]

The debates certainly did not end here since the disagreement was larger than the movie itself. How this movie represented the Stalinist past, how it depicted the history of the fathers, was going to determine whether the fathers' legacy would be venerated or debased. If the world the fathers created under Stalin featured a collective that not only produced conditions for arbitrary suffering but was consequently also indifferent to the plight of innocent people, then the sixties generation earned the right to act somewhat independently of the fathers. And the fathers, with their transgressions in public view, would be hesitant to respond to their sons' questions about how to live life correctly.

Although *Clear Skies* indisputably promoted faith in the Communist system, it did not offer an answer as to who was at the center of the post-Stalinist faith. Stalin, the supreme deity, was deposed, and those sons who blithely and mechanically followed the Father of the Peoples were branded followers of a "personality cult." Thus the sixties generation began to

[39] RGALI f. 2936 op. 1, d. 457, l. 8.

[40] Ibid., ll. 34-35.

seek new meaning and turned inward to find the answers for *themselves*, distancing themselves from the ways of their fathers. Much like in Astakhov's case, the freedom of the imprisoned sons came only at the price of the father's death. In *Clear Skies*, once Astakhov's nephew announces Stalin's death, the scene cuts into a monumental visual—an actual thaw. The viewer is treated to a natural tour-de-force: as the sun weakens the ice holding the river back, the power of the water surges forward to a classical music crescendo that announces nature's awakening and a defeat of the Stalinist freeze. During a public discussion of the movie, Chukhrai himself commented on the symbol saying: "when we thought about it [Stalin's death], it seemed that everything will vanish, it seemed that night will reign eternal. . . . But life takes its course, and winter turns into spring and the world does not wither when one man dies."[41] Through his hero Chukhrai shows that life after Stalin not only continues but also flourishes.

A Comrade Salakhian, one of the viewers at the same forum, commented on the central task of this new era: "The movie demonstrates how a man ought to behave, how he should love. Most importantly, according to Salakhian, is that Chukhrai's film poses a universal question about faith and about trust: "What do you believe in?" This was, indeed, to be the central question of the sixties generation. This kind of questioning, however, alarmed the conservative forces in the Communist Party and they insistently sought to arbitrate public tastes and morality. These orthodox groups successfully played on Khrushchev's fear of public disorder by invoking increasing trends of "anarchism" and "nihilism" among the Soviet youth. As much as *Clear Skies* did to legitimize individuals' autonomy, the film *Lenin's Guard* inadvertently galvanized the conservative opposition to publicly discredit the merits of individualistic attitudes and actions.

[41] RGALI, f. 2936 op. 1, d. 457, l. 102.

Hamletism and Post-Stalinist Masculinity

Veteran director D. S. Donskoi reacted optimistically to the meaning of *Clear Skies'* official release and promotion by commenting: "We have become unaccustomed to speaking the truth because we perpetually waited for orders 'from above.' And now we are told that we are free to discuss, to argue, to settle matters ourselves. It's been made clear that no one will be able to order us around and arbitrarily refuse to release a film."[42] Donskoi pronounced Chukhrai's movie indicative of this trend and that it should be valued for this reason. Indeed, as *Clear Skies* makes evident, reformist moviemakers successfully navigated the turbulent ideological waters and used Khrushchev's de-Stalinization program to fashion an alternative system of values—one in which authority is decentralized and one in which individuals did not have to sacrifice their individuality to belong to the collective.

While Chukhrai's film certainly pushed the envelope by extolling individual autonomy in a system obsessed with communal will, he nonetheless portrayed Astakhov's rebellion as a result of his faith in communism. Other directors also explored the issue of generational conflict but did so within certain ideological limits. Khutsiev's film became problematic precisely because it crossed the line other reformist directors were careful to tread. Thus, even though the focus of Khutsiev's work built on an emerging trend spearheaded by directors like Chukhrai, it reflected critically on the officially accepted view of generational relations during a politically charged period.

By the time Khutsiev was shooting *Lenin's Guard*, there had been numerous films that had, to one extent or another, touched on the issue of generational relations. By rejecting the Stalinist masculine experience as contrived, reformist moviemakers privileged film heroes who prized critical thought and who edified by posing open-ended questions rather

[42] Ibid., l. 90.

than offering foolproof answers. This is not to say that Thaw-era protagonists were predisposed to passivity, but rather that their actions were a product of their own thoughts and doubts, rather than a consequence of the party's directives. In other words, reformist directors propagated inconclusive finales, believing that the audiences would independently arrive at an answer. Many reformist directors focused on individualizing their protagonists, basing the hero's actions on his particular psychology, rather than a universal socialist realist model.

Film critic A. Beilin questioned the tendency to censor heroes who pursued issues relevant to their own lives, despite the fact that the party had already outlined the course for a collective future. Beilin's arguments were in keeping with Khrushchev's trust in the people's initiative. Beilin reasoned: "Is the party, having determined the appropriate path of our [collective] development, really interested in having individuals resting on their laurels, in not having them launch new tasks and overcome new obstacles?"[43] In other words, de-Stalinization legitimized doubt and questioning. After all, if the Communist movement was to be salvaged from the excesses of Stalinism, a mark of the true believer was firstly and foremostly doubt and reflection.

The legitimization of doubt was hotly contested as a way of determining one's identity and one's allegiances, even though this process was a natural outcome of Khrushchev's secret speech. On the one hand, the legalization of suspicion regarding the Stalinist system legitimized Khrushchev's push to drive out "Stalin's heirs" from the bureaucracy. On the other hand, this same process provided the reformist intelligentsia with an officially-sanctioned validation to advance their own blueprint for a post-Stalinist social order. The vision post-Stalinist movies projected to millions of movie-goers yearly

[43] A. Beilin, "Tsel' zhizni," *Zvezda*, 6 (1964): 186.

authenticated the everyday experience and empowered the average Soviet citizen to give meaning to their own reflections—without the blessings of the party apparatus. The new heroes of the everyday served as an inspiration for the new generation of Soviet citizens who were too young to remember the horrors of Stalinism and the Great Patriotic War but were old enough to reap the benefits of de-Stalinization. These men, whose fathers had perished during the war as youths, were often the protagonists of Khrushchev-era films and were regularly at the center of debates. The most contentious point was the question of their ideological custody. Who was responsible for their communist consciousness? De-Stalinization laid bare the sins of the fathers and the celluloid *pater familias* was often portrayed as unable and unworthy of leading the young into ideological battle. Consequently, many reformist intellectuals promoted the idea that the young must find their own way in life in order for their values to be authentic and their achievements legitimate.

More often than not, however, the state and conservative intelligentsia would construe depictions of self-sufficient youth as an attack on its authority—and perhaps rightfully so. Film critic N. Sergovantsev complained in 1962 that the artificial problem of fathers and sons arose because certain artists arbitrarily rejected all that was realized during the cult of personality; these artists maligned the integrity of an entire generation. Sergovantsev protested against such false interpretations: "Proactive people of the older generation are proclaimed as stillborn; they are termed regressive; they are refused their historical role and significance. The 'old men' (*stariki*), 'the fathers,' are placed in opposition to the young generation, while 'the children,' who, as if entirely absolved from the past, earn the right to doubt everything the fathers believed in."[44]

[44] N. Sergovantsev, "Otkuda mal'chik?," *Oktiabr'* 10 (1962): 209.

The state could not always respond uniformly to the problem Sergovantsev identified since Khrushchev's reforms fluctuated in intensity and purpose. Inconsistencies aside, the regime committed itself to playing a central role in the upbringing of the youth. Historians Juliane Fürst and Oleg Kharkhordin have both noted the oppressive mechanisms Khrushchev instituted to monitor and correct anti-Soviet trends among the youth: aggressively enforcing Communist morality through civilian patrols, shaming individuals in local newspapers, and dispatching trainloads of youngsters to work in God-forsaken places under dreadful conditions.[45] As Fürst concludes, Khrushchev's youth policy "intruded into ordinary youngsters' daily lives on a recurrent basis by influencing youth's decisions in its choice of dress, style of dancing, displays of love and affection and leisure pursuits."[46] In this context, the censorship of movies containing ideologically offensive material was another way of ensuring that Soviet youth internalize the official value system.

The regime's mission to promote a uniform system of officially sanctioned beliefs only intensified after the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961 where he announced that the "current generation will live under communism."[47] Six months after the party congress, Khrushchev presided over the Young Communist League Congress and instructed the participants to identify more closely with the historical mission their fathers and grandfathers had lived and died for:

> You young people should not become conceited. I am proud of my generation. People of the older generation lived through hunger and devastation; they restored the economy by heroic effort. They served as soldiers in the Second

[45] Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 279-303; and J. Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?: Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture Between Stalin and Khrushchev" in *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era*, ed. Polly Jones (New York: Routledge, 2006), 135-53.

[46] Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring?,"150.

[47] "Programma KPSS, Section V, Part 1," *Pravda,* 30 July, 1961.

> World War and defeated the most terrible enemy of mankind: fascism! Yes, we are proud of our times. You should take pride in our times because we are your fathers, your grandfathers, older brothers and sisters.[48]

But however incensed the top leadership became about the lack of concern for hierarchy among the youth, it was at the same time paradoxically responsible for this phenomenon since de-Stalinization emphasized independent initiative and a critical perspective. As film scholar Nancy Condee eloquently argued: "If Khrushchev could never fully disentangle himself from the sins of Stalin and reinvent himself as innocent, neither could he succeed in arguing to the younger generation a philosophy of obedience, which he himself had so brilliantly violated."49 Nonetheless, In this politically charged atmosphere ideological watchdogs even more zealously censored movies and scenes they considered to be distracting the youth from the construction of communism.

Khutsiev's *Lenin's Guard*, a documentary-style portrayal of contemporary Soviet youth, came too close to capturing the mood of young Muscovites and became a victim of a campaign for ideological purity. The movie follows the maturation of three male friends in their early twenties, who attempt to make sense of their lives. In portraying Sergei's, Kolia's, and Slava's quest for larger meaning, the director structures the movie as a series of unrelated episodes. But it was not the apparent departure from socialist realist narrative practices that drew Khrushchev's ire. Rather, the First Party Secretary was beside himself for two reasons. First, he refused to believe that a Soviet youth like Sergei could be so confused about life's purpose. Most importantly, Khrushchev vehemently objected that the script did not provide a scene in which an authority figure could help Sergei find his (socialist) way.

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[48] Nikita Khrushchev, "Molodye stroiteli kommunizma, vysoko nesite znamia Lenina," *Pravda*, April 21, 1962, p. 1.

[49] Nancy Condee "Cultural Codes of the Thaw" in *Nikita Khrushchev*, ed. W. Taubman, S. Khrushchev, and A. Gleason (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2000), 166.

Khrushchev especially fumed about the fact that the apparition of Sergei's father left the son in the dark about life's meaning. He bristled at this notion: "Do you really want us to believe that such a thing could be true? No one will ever believe that! It is common knowledge that even animals don't abandon their offspring."[50] To Khrushchev's dismay, however, Khutsiev's hero was far from an exception. The most prominent filmmakers of the period depicted imperfect youths who were reflective of both the collective and authority figures that led the collective but Khutsiev's movie was too explicit in portraying the independence of Soviet youth. This general trend is not at all surprising if we take into account that Hamlet—the symbol of independent-mindedness and suspiciousness—was one of the most celebrated icons of the Thaw period.

Ever since the death of Stalin the intelligentsia extolled the man they were forbidden to celebrate under the iron rule of the Great Leader: the young Danish prince Hamlet. Soviet literature specialists explained the absence of Hamlet on Soviet stages and classroom syllabi in the following way: "In contrast with heroes of other great Shakespearean tragedies, Hamlet . . . with his tragic doubts and indecisiveness, his inability to see concrete ways of eradicating evil, was distant from contemporary Soviet audiences that were filled with active courage, optimism, a sense of clear purpose in life. Soviet audiences looked to Shakespeare for a 'real hero,' not 'Hamletism,' for them synonymous with vacillation and passive reflection."[51] But after the tyrant's death the Soviet cultural scene was possessed with a virtual Hamlet fever; from the middle of the fifties onward, theaters built their repertoires around Hamlet, the period's "real hero," and he became a symbol of the post-Stalin era much

[50] Johnson, *Khrushchev and the Arts*, 154.

[51] N. N. Chushkin, *Gamlet-Kachalov* (Moscow, 1966), 309, quoted in Arthur P. Mendel, "Hamlet and Soviet Humanism," *Slavic Review* 30, no. 4 (1971): 733.

in the way E. Hemmingway and J. London. I. Vertzman, a contemporary leading figure in the field of Shakespeare studies explained this phenomenon: "Hamlet is nearer to us than any other Shakespeare hero, both in his strengths and his weaknesses. If it is so easy to come to love Hamlet, it is because we sense in him something of ourselves; and if at times he is so difficult to understand, it is similarly, because we do not, as yet, know ourselves too well, or rather, like the ostrich, fear such knowledge."[52]

With these commentaries in mind, it comes as no surprise that conservative critics accused the heroes of *Lenin's Guard* of "Hamletism"—publicly shaming them for passivity, inaction, and pathologic introversion. A. Andrievskii, for example, chides the three protagonists: "We see them going to work not as active participant of the collective but as reflex-driven Hamlet figures, bent on answering the questions of how to live their lives."[53] Script-writer S. I. Rostotskii furthered Andrievski's criticism: "I cannot see why this hero in particular is asking the question of how to live. I mean, I can't see any tragedies in his life. . . . How many times would we have to repeat to him 'others died so you might live' in order for him to understand his life's goal?"[54] These comments lay bare the return to Stalinist value judgments—judgments that testified that Stalin's famous 1945 dictum pronouncing Soviet citizens "cogs of the great state machine" was anything but dead. The sons, then, became indebted to the fathers for the blood they shed to defend the fatherland against the Nazi invaders. The sons' existentialist self-examination was proclaimed to be pure selfishness—an insult to those who selflessly lay down their lives for the Soviet system. Khutsiev's scene

[52] I. Vertsman, "K problemam 'Gamlet'," in *Shekspirovskii sbornik* (Moscow, 1961), 129, quoted in Mendel, "Hamlet," 734.

[53] RGALI, f. 2468, op. 5, d. 46, l. 13.

[54] Ibid., l. 33.

suggested that the son had literally and metaphorically "outgrown" his parent. War, with its explicit symbolism and rhetoric, could not serve as a reference point to the young men who were growing up in a much more complex postwar environment. The world that his father knew had ceased to exist and the lessons that defined his generation lost their applicability in the post-Stalinist milieu.[55] The universal truths of Stalin's time, proclaimed by the ever-wise elders, were no longer attainable. The notion that the fathers who became the ultimate martyrs for the cause could not serve as examples even beyond the grave added salt to the open wound of Khrushchev generation.

Thus while the authorities objected to the films that portrayed Soviet youth as inactive and vacillating, they worried more about another aspect of contemporary moviemaking. These young celluloid heroes were modeled after Hamlet, whom Shakespeare specialists described as knowing "no dogmas, doctrines, pre-constructed systems of thought." The Danish prince was furthermore described as "endlessly discontent and searching, with no group, camp or party behind him, no preacher, teacher or mentor beside him, bearing him a catechism or manual of regulations in one hand and pointing upward with the other." It is precisely Hamlet's apparent imperviousness to external influences for which the reformist intelligentsia praised Khutsiev's Sergei. In 1962 writer Viktor Nekrasov, among others, defended Lenin's Guard's main hero by commenting: "I am eternally grateful to Khutsiev for not having dragged out onto the movie screen a gray-mustached and all-knowing worker who had ready-made answers for everything. Had the omniscient older worker appeared with his

[55] In literature, the generational rift was apparent in that the sixties generation had literary produced an argot of their own, making constructive dialogue exceedingly difficult. Chudakov and Chudakova, for instance, observe the following about the "youth prose" movement: "In its negation of the verbal clichés of the literature of the past, language became the first vehicle of subversion within permissible limits." See M. Chudak and A. Chudakova, "Sovremennaia povest' i iumor," *Novyi mir* 7 (1967): 321-22.

inspiring words, the film would have been spoiled."56 Moreover, Grigorii Koznintsev, a director who made the 1964 Soviet world-renowned screen adaptation of Hamlet, defined the term heroism both for Sergei and those celluloid heroes who followed his mold thusly: "Hamlet—thinks. This is the greatest threat of all."[57]

The depiction of the youth's autonomy in many ways mirrored the relationship between the party and the intelligentsia. In other words, by consciously reducing the roles authority figures played in plots and by giving more substantive autonomy regarding decision-making to the youth itself, the intelligentsia was establishing itself as the new norm-setter, as a social element capable of exerting influence on a general populace with innovative agendas. The Communist Party with Khrushchev at its helm reacted unambiguously. Two weeks following Khrushchev's legendary visit to the Manezh in 1962, he assembled 300 artists at the villa for official receptions on Lenin Hills. There, after an hour-long feast, he lectured the artists about "real art" only to conclude with the following analogy: "And I'll tell you another thing. It can happen like this: a colonel starts up an argument with a general and the colonel is persuasive, very persuasive. And the general listens, and listens and in principle he cannot object. But he will tire of the colonel, he will stand and say: Listen here, you're a colonel and I'm a general. About face and forward march!"— and the colonel will turn to go fulfill his orders. So, there you go, you are the colonel and I, if you will, a general. So. About face! Forward march!"

Three months later, at the Kremlin, in the Sverdlov Hall, on March 7 and 8 Khrushchev again reiterated the state's authority over the arts. This time there were

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[56] RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 41, l. 77.

[57] Grigorii Kozintsev, *Nash sovremennik: Villiam Shekspir* (Moscow, 1966), 306, quoted in Mendel, "Hamlet," 743.

approximately 400 invitees.[58] While interrogating the popular poet A. Voznesenskii, Khrushchev condemned him: "Comrade Voznesenskii, until you understand that you are nothing, that you are but one of the three and half million that are born each year in the USSR, nothing good will come of you. Stamp that on your nose: you are nothing!" Director M. Romm contended that the allusion to the Nazi slogan "You are nothing; your nation is everything" was not lost on those in the room. Many such altercations made it clear that promoting alternative visions of man's position in society was a risky undertaking. At the same meeting Khrushchev also directly threatened the ideological misfits: "What, you think we forgot how to arrest people?"[59] It was also not a coincidence that he reminded the intellectuals yet again about the tragic fate of the Hungarian Petofi circle, organized by the Hungarian Young Communists during the disastrous Hungarian uprising in 1956, which was crushed by Soviet armed forces. Khrushchev and his conservative supporters saw that unguided, unsupervised youth, spurred by the examples of Hamlet-like figures projected from the screen would, with time, likely undermine the party's authority. The state ideologues had come to feel threatened by the new intellectual currents that promoted a new way of understanding how to practice one's masculinity through the prism of autonomous thought. As Khrushchev unambiguously maintained: "We believe that our young creative workers will carry on the cause of their fathers . . ."[60]

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[58] Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 153.

[59] The details of Khrushchev's meeting with the intellectuals on March 7 and March 8, 1963, are available in M. Romm's memoirs. See M. Romm, *Kak v kino: ustnye rasskazy* (Nizhnii Novgorod: DEKOM, 2003).

[60] Johnson, *Khrushchev and the Arts*, 164.

Conclusion

In his 1965 monograph entitled *Epoch, Hero, Viewer*, the distinguished Soviet movie critic E. S. Gromov somberly pronounced that the definitive hero of the contemporary period has yet to appear on Soviet screens.[61] Ten years following the Twentieth Party Congress, when Khrushchev called for more sincerity in the arts, movie screens did not create the kind of hero that would rally the enthusiasm of Soviet audiences. This is not to say that the period created no popular movie protagonists. On the contrary, many of the era's movies drew large crowds and are fondly remembered today by those who grew up watching them. There did not exist, however, a celluloid hero that captured the imagination of the populace and urged "the masses" to action. The period's movie protagonists were not meant to mobilize, but were meant to induce reflection. Contemporary moviemakers crafted heroes who lacked the bombastic personalities that so well fit the Stalinist era: gone were the grandiloquent pronouncements, banished were the larger-than-life gestures. Following Khrushchev's expose of Stalin's crimes, artists shied away from what they perceived to be tools of a repressive regime. What remained were ordinary men with their lives and tribulations stripped of historic monumentality. Gromov opined that it was no wonder audiences were magnetically attracted to heroes featured in the Hollywood blockbuster *The Magnificent Seven*: the people had wanted heroes of epic proportions.[62] The diminished "size" of the new celluloid characters Gromov and other contemporary critics bemoaned, however, was a direct and logical outcome of de-Stalinization.

Stalin's "cult of personality" created celluloid heroes of mythic proportions. Once the Stalinist myth began to ring hollow, it was only natural that the movie heroes who gave life

[61] E. S. Gromov, Vremia, geroi, zritel' (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1965): 111.

[62] Ibid., 64.

to this worldview morphed into more palatable incarnations of contemporary realities. Because de-Stalinization also made questioning of authority possible, directors began investigating issues of power, conformity, and hierarchy throughout this period—particularly when portraying the lives of the Soviet youth. Filmmakers most frequently employed the historically dominant father-son relationship to provide a concrete, individualized shape to broader generational dynamics. Communist officials rarely approved of screening movies containing conflictual relations between fathers and sons since examinations of the "generational problem" complicated a myth central to Soviet ideology: the sons willingly and obediently assume the historic mission of their father to construct a communist society. Owing to Khrushchev's liberalization of the arts, however, moviemakers succeeded in complicating the formerly incontestable ideological myth.

The increase of this artistic trend forced party officials on the defensive; the only alternative the more conservative representatives could offer was more of the old Stalinist fare. In 1961, for example, the veteran film critic R. N. Iurenev critically reflected on the portrayal of young heroes in Soviet film, complaining: "When my generation was young, our highest ambition was the Arctic, the conquering of new lands. Those fantasies were tied to our desire to fly higher and further than anyone else. And this romanticism was captured by Sergei Gerasimov in his (1936) movie *The Fearless Seven*."[63] Khrushchev also waxed nostalgic about Stalin-era heroes who dutifully obeyed the party. The same man who denounced Stalinist art for its artificiality, criticized M. Khutseiv's movie *Lenin's Guard* by extolling the Stalinist youth portrayed in movies of the late 1940s, in which "our Soviet youth carry on and multiply the heroic traditions of the generations who went before, the

[63] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 917, l 7.

generations that demonstrated their loyalty to the ideals of Marxism-Leninism both in peacetime constructions and at the front of the Great Patriotic War."[64]

Few of the heroes in post-Stalinist movies could match the heroics of *The Fearless Seven* or *The Magnificent Seven*. Not only were their challenges tied to the mundane problems of the everyday, but they also had an ideologically problematic relationship with authority. Protagonists featured in epic films could achieve Herculean feats since their goal was clear and their allegiances uncomplicated. As Sergei in *Lenin's Guard* or Astakhov in *Clear Skies* demonstrate, the post-Stalinist celluloid hero's goal was the search for meaning after the collapse of faith in Stalin. Without it, marching onto the Arctic like the characters of *The Fearless Seven*, even under the guidance of party officials, would be disingenuous. The party authorities could not realistically object since Khrushchev himself banned unduly idealization of Soviet reality. The frustrations that contemporary heroes were not heroic enough abounded. After all, it was this generation that was slated to achieve communism by 1980.

While de-Stalinization served as an impetus to discuss the validity of masculine monumentalism, the divergent memory and interpretations of World War II proved central to defining post-Stalinist masculinity. Discussions surrounding *Lenin's Guard* illustrate there were two ways to apply the lessons of the Great Patriotic War. On the one hand, the reformist filmmakers interpreted the war years as proof of the nation's loyalty—a proof that entitled all citizens to a liberalization of social controls. On the other hand, the more conservative elements demanded that it was only fair that those alive continue to follow the system so many died for. The former based authentic masculinity on a man's ability to act independently and critically while the latter judged true Soviet masculinity based on a man's

[64] Johnson, *Khrushchev and the Arts*, 154.

willingness to renounce personal needs for the benefit of the greater good. These varied interpretations of World War II continued to define how young Soviet men understood their masculinity and how they evaluated the masculinity of their fathers throughout the Khrushchev period and beyond.

By reconceptualizing how men of different generations ought to relate to each other, reformist filmmakers facilitated a broader reframing of gender relations in general. The unceremonious dethroning of the wise patriarch created space to depict an alternative evolution of masculine identity. Prompted by widespread anxiety about private life and the primacy of individual emotion, directors examined their protagonists in the context of romantic (or otherwise personal) relationships. Thaw-era celluloid heroes began embracing heterosexual, marital, and maternal relationships, defining their gendered identity in the process of establishing and nurturing non-homosocial relationships. As the next chapter will demonstrate in greater detail, reformist directors slowly dispensed with the figure of the wise patriarch and directed the attention of their heroes to fleeting romantic interests, girlfriends, wives, and mothers.

As films ceased being a didactic spectacle they once were and began focusing on the inner lives of their heroes, the men appearing on screens in the Khrushchev era defined themselves through navigating personal and mostly romantic relationships rather than solving the intricacies of the steel factory production process with other like-minded men. Celluloid masculinity was no longer exclusively forged in the public realm as a sacrifice to communal interests, perpetually subject to the patriarch's judgment. Instead, directors depicted their heroes forming their identity through a process that either involved intimate (and often romantic) relations or transpired in solitude. This is not to say that post-Stalinist heroes

renounced a collectivist outlook, but that the manner in which they became aware of how to "perform" their masculinity transpired in a markedly different fashion. In other words, the myth of the "great Soviet family," with its attendant collectivistic and homosocial character, lost its cultural supremacy. This shift also allowed for a reconsideration of the celluloid heroine's secondary status in the archetypal socialist realist narrative.

Chapter 3

Universalizing the Feminine and Feminizing the Masculine: Changing Gender Relations in Thaw-Era Film

When Vladimir Pomerantsev called for more sincerity in literature in 1953, he directed his ire at Stalinist heroes whose world revolved entirely around work, ridiculing socialist realist stock characters: "Remember how the mechanic from the machine-tractor station dreams about a girl who has caught his eye, about how together they might repair the machinery? Did he really get married only for this?"[1] Il'ia Ehrenburg's groundbreaking 1954 novel *The Thaw* further established intimate, romantic feelings as a motivating force in people's lives. Jealousy, sadness, anger, and love inform the characters' actions and drive the plot. The protagonist, engineer Dmitrii Sergeevich Koroteev, although a conscientious worker, focuses on his romantic feelings for Lena, a married woman alienated from her dull, careerist husband. Because she cannot deny her attraction to Koroteev, she leaves her hypocritical spouse for the sensitive, ethical protagonist. The novel foreshadowed a loosening of the Stalin-era moral straightjacket, announcing a wider deligitimization of heroes motivated exclusively by their job performance.

The stress on understanding one's inner world, however, created a new set of problems for Soviet artists. Through Koroteev, Ehrenburg reflects on the complexity of the human condition: "It is curious how conflicting emotions can exist in one person. . . . A

[1] V. M. Pomerantsev, "Ob iskrennosti v literature," *Novyi mir* 12 (1953): 218.

machine's bad parts can be easily replaced. But how do you fix a human being?"[2] Inspired by ground-breaking literature, reformist filmmakers faced the challenge of conveying their characters' emotional landscape. Moviemakers had to consider how to reconcile irrational individual feelings with officially-propagated ideas about the rationality of human nature.

Like the era's journalists and novelists, filmmakers zoomed in on the private lives of Soviet citizens. Film crews entered the living quarters of their fictional heroes, recording their intimate behind-the-door activities in a quasi-documentary fashion, revealing the influence of the Italian neorealism. Once firmly grounded in public spaces (factory floors, coal mines, construction sites, and collective farms) the directors' gaze now became transfixed on everyday goings-on in kitchens, dorm rooms, and university hallways. The microcosms post-Stalinist directors captured contrasted sharply with the uncomplicated domestic bliss characteristic of literature and film from the1930s and 1940. All of a sudden, infidelity, marital discord, and parental negligence came into full public view; Thaw narratives built conflict around deeply troubled households, marriages, families, and romances. The outwardly model housewives all too often turned out to be adulterous mistresses while seemingly good-natured husbands hid their alcoholism and domestic abuse from neighbors and friends. Importantly, the great majority of these films were not cautionary morality tales but sincere attempts to grapple with the intricacies of human psychology.

Reformist directors' treatment of issues central to the construction of communist morality—romantic love, sexuality, marriage, and childrearing, among others—profoundly transformed gender representations and reassessed the power dynamics between the sexes. The Thaw-era depictions of women challenged the Stalinist view of femininity as exclusively

[2] Il'ia Erenburg, *Ottepel'* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1956), 93.

secondary to, and supportive of, heroic masculinity. Liberating female figures from the conservative dogmatism of the Stalin years, Thaw filmmakers offered images of women who were not defined and limited by their procreative and/or productive experiences. Instead, cinema showcased heroines whose actions were determined by their own uniqueness and distinctive belief system. Directors became focused on developing three-dimensional characters whose deeds fit their psychological makeup.

In this sense the film industry mirrored the state's discourse on gender equality. For the first time since Stalin proclaimed the "woman question" resolved in 1930, Soviet authorities publicly acknowledged that more work needed to be done to achieve parity between the sexes. In 1956, for instance, the Khrushchev leadership organized an international seminar on the "Equality of Women in the USSR" with delegates from thirty-seven countries. Although the Soviet leadership's policies failed to alleviate the double burden of professional and domestic responsibilities women had to shoulder, the reopening of the "woman question" nonetheless brought into public light the reality of women's lives and enabled women's voices to come to the fore.[3] In postwar literature too, female authors became an influential cultural force. Beth Holmgren notes that their perspective altered the tone of the national discourse: "Women writers seemed to be envisioning a kinder, gentler postwar Soviet Union shaped in their own wishful self-image. Predictably enough, their manner of presentation always implied a realist poetics, a conscientious depiction of real-life mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, superiors, and peers." [4]

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[3] For an examination of how the "woman question" evolved during the Khrushchev era on both a discursive and practical level see Melanie Ilič, Susan Reid, and Lynne Attwood, eds. *Women in the Khrushchev Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

[4] See Beth Holmgren, "Writing the Female Body Politic (1945-1985)," in *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*, eds., A.M. Barker and J. M. Gheith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 225-42.

As the previous chapter demonstrates, the paternal figure of the Khrushchev period became an imperfect reflection of his Stalinist self. Since the symbolic father ceased being the omnipotent and unerring guide to his sons, he, too, required redemption. As a result, the child or young man enabled the elder to regain moral integrity. The revision of the fathers-and-sons trope compelled filmmakers to recast not only heretofore strictly hierarchical masculine relationships, but also to reconceptualize the role of women and stereotypical "feminine qualities" in the socialist realist canon. While an emotionally spontaneous female figure did not replace the politically conscious male leader, she played an equally important function. Most frequently, the heroine would stand by her man even when the collective cast him out, eventually reintegrating him into the communal fold. The idea that a wife's unswerving loyalty trumped the wisdom of the collective was ideologically radical. Unlike Stalinist heroines, who almost exclusively played supportive and secondary roles, their Khrushchevian sisters often moved to the forefront of the narrative, rescuing the hero from a tragic end. In stark contrast to the fantastical Heroines of Labor and Motherhood, post-Stalinist female protagonists became real women with individualized histories and deeply-etched personalities. The new type of heroine demanded more in-depth psychological treatment and, as a consequence, filmmakers discarded the housewife-cum-Stakhanovite feminine ideal, depicting women as unique individuals irreducible to a simplistic schema.

In addition to depicting psychologically complex heroines, filmmakers began to stress stereotypically feminine qualities—empathy, vulnerability, and emotiveness—as key to achieving individual self-actualization and collective harmony. The many contemporary plots featuring the redemptive powers of empathetic, caring, and matronly heroines symbolized the reformist intelligentsia's aspiration to replace the aggressively collectivist, anti-

individualistic ethos with one guided by a spirit of compassionate civic-mindedness [5] After Khrushchev revealed just how depraved the Communist Party had been under the authoritarian rule of "the Father of the People," filmmakers often promoted celluloid heroines as emblems for the benevolent, humanistic, and "motherly" character of the de-Stalinization project.

These privileged virtues, however, were not the sole purview of female protagonists. Even a cursory glance at Thaw-era films reveals a gallery of negative heroines: insensitive mothers, callous wives, and selfish daughters. The era's emotional ideals applied to men as well; the archetypal post-Stalinist hero could operate a crane equally as well as he could offer emotional support to his spouse. Much in the way women of Stalin's time were expected to combine a feminine countenance with a militaristic mindset, men of the Khrushchev period were supposed to blend working-class machismo with sensitivity and emotional insight. While the typical Stalinist hero strove to achieve political consciousness by overfulfilling production quotas and slaying the enemies of the people, post-Stalin protagonists proved their mettle by becoming more sensitive husbands and domestic partners—a task that required more finesse than fixing a blast furnace.

Although audiences generally approved of seeing more sensitive men on movie screens and accepted more realistic depictions of women, directors walked a fine line between exploring the diversity of gendered experiences in the Soviet context and offending the moviegoers' rather conservative views of gender norms. As this chapter demonstrates, moviegoers never lost taste for macho heroics; the enormous popularity of Aleksei

[5] Elena Monastireva-Ansdell has also noted in her analysis of the G. Chukhrai movie *Forty-first* that "the film repudiates the previously celebrated hypermasculinity compromised under Stalin and proclaims emotional openness and compassion as the Thaw's new ideal." "See Redressing the Commissar: Thaw Cinema Revises Soviet Structuring Myths," *The Russian Review* 65 (2006): 230-49.

Saltykov's 1964 two-part feature *The Chairman* (Predsedatel'), which sold a total of sixty-six million tickets, demonstrated the audience's desire for a an aggressive, rough-and-tumble masculinity. Nonetheless, in a society enamored by Earnest Hemmingway's and Jack London's protagonists, emotive masculinity represented a significant cultural intervention.

The relative flexibility directors had in reinterpreting traditional male gender roles did not, however, apply as generously to celluloid heroines. Despite the fact that reformist filmmakers expanded the psychological make-up of their female protagonists, they could not present them outside the traditionally prescribed gender roles. Although directors could more thoughtfully explore the inner workings of female protagonists without attaching moral judgment to their behavior, they could (or would) not give life to heroines who did not fit comfortably within stereotypically feminine roles. While movie heroes could operate on both a rational and emotional level, the cathartic episodes of female characters almost always happened within the romantic or domestic spheres.

The double standard was largely due to the way masculine and feminine tropes operated in the Soviet context. Because masculinity stood in for the universal and national experience, it was possible for directors to broaden the celluloid hero's role beyond the gender-specific ones, such as soldier or patriarch. But since femininity did not communicate national values, viewers and art critics judged femininity from a gendered, rather than a more generalized viewpoint. Therefore, reformist filmmakers could film cheating wives, bungling mothers, and errant daughters with due complexity and even sympathy, but could not defend a heroine whose *modus operandi* was not tied to emotional reasoning. For instance, Larisa Shepit'ko's 1966 film *Wings* (Kryl'ia), which explored the emotional alienation of a much-decorated female war veteran during peacetime, clearly demonstrated the low level of

tolerance for heroines who transgressed their allotted gender roles. In comparison with the changing representation of movie heroes, both moviegoers and party officials proved less eager to liberate female movie heroines from the Stalinist legacy despite general agreement that Soviet realities should no longer be glamorized in the arts.

Mariutka and Veronika (Re)Make History

Stalinist novels, films, and instructional manuals shaped a tightly codified set of rules and regulations governing Soviet femininity. A Stalinist heroine performed effortlessly at the factory while simultaneously creating a cozy household and raising wholesome offspring for the Fatherland. In both reproductive and productive spheres of her life, the Soviet woman knew no bounds. The idealized movie heroines of the 1930s symbolized "a pledge to the audience that happiness lay not too far in the future."[6] Both the protagonist's actions and her appearance left no room for doubt that she was as morally wholesome as she was politically conscious. The Stalinist heroine was a cheerful workaholic motivated by a promise of a glorious tomorrow, ready to erupt in song at any given moment. Her looks were as dazzling as her personality; "she was strong, with broad bones, with prominent features and a sporty figure. Her hair was blonde, her teeth white; she had dimpled cheeks and a contagious smile."[7]

This fresh-faced and hyper-positive figure became a genuinely popular icon, clearly demarcating the Stalinist vision of the world. When World War II began in 1941, the patient, domestic, and yet subtly smoldering wife, anxiously awaiting her husband's return, replaced

[6] Oksana Bulgakova, "The Hydra of Soviet Cinema: The Metamorphoses of the Soviet Film Heroine," in *Red Women on the Silver Screen: Soviet Women and Cinema from the Beginning to the End of the Communist Era*, ed. Lynne Attwood (London: Pandora Press, 1993), 157.

[7] Ibid.

this folkloric but professional woman. Alternatively, she would become a courageous partisan fighter, ready to sacrifice everything to save her country, her family, and her ideals against impossible odds. In either case, she was wedded to the collective interests as much as she was to her husband.[8] After the war's end, portrayals of contemporary Soviet women virtually disappeared from the nation's screens. What little film production there was in the last eight years of Stalin's rule was dedicated to biographies of "great men."

No 1950s films subverted Stalinist notions of femininity more than G. N. Chukhrai's *The Forty-first* (1956) and M. Kalatozov's *The Cranes are Flying* (1957). Not only do these directors depict independent women whose decision-making is based on deeply personal considerations, but they also legitimized the ideological value of the emotional and individual in Soviet teleology. The central conflicts of these motion pictures center around the heroines' internal conundrum, which is itself a product of the difficult choices they needed to make. Both protagonists transgress conventional morality while the narratives chronicle how these two women struggle with the choices they make. The filmmakers provide no easy answer and at no point does a wise father figure emerge to lead them onto the straight and narrow path. Chukhrai's and Kalatozov's stories attracted controversy because they failed to dole out a punishment fitting the heroines' transgression, leaving "the moral of the story" ambiguous. In this sense, these films enabled other moviemakers to portray both male and female protagonists whose actions were based on their own, personalized understanding of right and wrong and whose neglect of accepted social norms did not automatically cast them in a negative light.

[8] For more on female protagonists in war-era movies see Denise Youngblood, *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914-2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 61-71.

Particularly significant is the fact that both these films went beyond the conventional depictions of two seminal events in Soviet history: the Civil War and the Second World War. The historical accounts associated with these wars had heretofore served to create a coherent, unifying national identity. The individual fates featured in productions about nationally significant events mattered only insofar as the individual experience implied and mirrored a national one. Moreover, the national narrative (especially in war cinematography) privileged the male experience and kept silent on all personalized accounts that failed to neatly fit into the established socialist realist canon. In other words, the official record negated any and all gendered experiences that did not reinforce its sanitized version of events.

Thus Chukhrai's and Kalatozov's productions challenged the party's monopoly on interpreting the country's past. These directors de-ideologized history since their characters gave more thought to their immediate concerns than to the historical import of their deeds; they preoccupied themselves more with battling their own demons than with defeating external enemies. The portrayal of these two female protagonists avoided showcasing precisely how Bolshevik ideology and party discipline breathed meaning into their lives and instead shed light on the intricacies of the human condition. For the first time since Stalin's death, class and ideological consciousness did not predetermine or govern celluloid heroes' actions. Instead, the volatile world of emotions shaped the protagonists' interaction with the collective.

Mariutka, the lead heroine of *The Forty-first*, caused a stir long before she hit Soviet screens on October 15, 1956, eight months after Khrushchev's "secret speech." The tragic story features a female Red Guard sniper who falls in love with her ideological enemy, a White Guardsman, during the Civil War. Mariutka's regiment captures officer Govorukha-

Otrok on his way to headquarters and keeps him alive because he has knowledge of the White Army's impending military strategies. Though the class-conscious and ideologically-robust Mariutka guards the prisoner with great vigilance, a romantic affair develops as a string of circumstances strands the pair on a deserted island in the Aral Sea. In this Crusoe-like environment, their love flourishes, undisturbed by the forces that otherwise would have destroyed their untainted affection. Tragedy, however, strikes the lovers' paradise when Govorukha-Otrok's comrades-in-arms approach the island by boat. As Mariutka's lover rushes toward his fellow soldiers, she fires a mortal shot, claiming her forty-first victim and losing her first, true love.

Though the story itself was an adaptation of Boris Lavrenev's 1924 novella of the same name, its appearance on the Soviet screen represented a politically charged event.[9] Namely, the movie's release would have been unthinkable merely three years earlier while Stalin was still alive; a tale of a forbidden romance with an ideological enemy ran counter to the rigid dogma governing socialist realism. But even in the first years after Stalin's death, studio directors, review committees, and script writers discouraged and even threatened the young director Grigorii Chukhrai from telling Mariutka's story. The Kiev motion picture studio, where Chukhrai worked after he graduated from the All-Russian State University of Cinematography (VGIK), shot down the script adaptation. The head of the establishment told the recent graduate that a script like the one he presented would ruin his career before it began. Chukhrai tried to convince his boss that the story is not only timely, but that it would excite Soviet viewers, who had grown tired of larger-than-life heroes with steel nerves instead of feelings. His supervisor ultimately dismissed the Central Asian setting as too

[9] G. Chukhrai's adaptation was actually a second attempt at screening B. Lavrenev's story. The first adaptation was done by Ia. Protazanov in 1927.

exotic and a waste of state resources: "You studied at the cinematographic institute; you were raised on the people's money. Think it over: what on earth are we going to do in Ukraine with camels?"[10]

It was not until the famed master M. I. Room helped the up-and-coming director arrange a transfer to the central Moscow studio, *Mosfil'm*, that the adaptation had a chance of reaching the screen. But even there Chukhrai faced opposition since his assigned scriptwriter, G. Koltunov, wanted to revise it to preclude any criticism from the myrmidons of socialist realism. According to Chukhrai's memoirs, Koltunov was convinced that Mariutka committed a crime against her class that bordered on treason. Chukhrai, in turn, relied on his wartime experiences to rationalize his heroine's deeds. He recalled the bewildering mix of anger and pity he felt for the defeated, hungry, and half-frozen German soldiers he saw at the end of the war. Chukhrai argued that, if he, as a loyal Red Army soldier could experience conflicting emotions about his mortal enemies then, surely, Mariutka could fall in love with her foe without losing her political convictions. Chukhrai defended his heroine by quipping: love is blind. (*Liubov' zla—poliubish' i kozla*). Unconvinced, Koltunov continued to play the ideological card by warning: "She might have fallen in love with the enemy but the viewer has to know that we, as authors, do not approve of her choice. You know very well what happens to those who propagate love for the enemy!" The studio's review board also reacted antagonistically toward the possible adaptation. The staunchest opponent of the script was veteran director G. L. Roshal', who predicted that Chukhrai was committing professional suicide by involving himself with the project. Roshal' saw the film's paradox as a recipe for disaster, claiming: "If you make the enemy likeable, the viewer will approve of the heroine's love but will not forgive her for shooting him. If you make him unlikeable, the audiences will

[10] G. Chukhrai, *Moe kino* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2002), 89.

forgive the gunshot but not her love for him."[11] Roshal' opposed the film since Mariutka's fate could not be boiled down to an easily-digestible lesson in communist morality; neither killing nor sparing her enemy/lover could redeem her.

Those in the movie industry establishment who protested against the script feared that the movie departed too radically from the black-and-white prescriptions of Stalinist morality. Moreover, Chukhrai's detractors saw his heroine as flawed since her emotions guided her decision-making to the same extent as her class-consciousness. The systematic opposition to the novella's adaptation showcased just how dogmatic the cinema industry had become under Stalin. Even after 1953, inflexible ideas about gender persisted and affected the moviemakers' creative process; head bureaucrats still promoted the Stalinist agenda, laboring under the (specious) impression that narrow gender models were indispensable to maintaining social uniformity and harmony. Chukhrai's commitment to this particular story consequently demonstrates a bourgeoning will among reformist directors to push through films that advanced an alternative vision for both women and individual choice in a collectivistic society. But had it not been for the unconditional support of I. A. Pyr'ev, the head of Mosfil'm and the chairman of the Cinematographic Workers' Union, the script would likely have been censored. Because of his belief in artistic license, the six-time winner of the Stalin Prize supported the young director's resolve to broaden the meta-narrative of the Civil War. Pyr'ev's support notwithstanding, the motion picture *Mosfil'm* eventually released generated its own share of heated discussions.

In his published review of *The Forty-first*, contemporaneous Soviet critic S. Freilikh noted that Mariutka directly counters the kinds of heroines that emerged during Stalin's cult of personality. Mariutka's tragic fate signaled an end to the lack of conflict and the

[11] Ibid., 103.

unconstrained glorification of Soviet realities. As Freilikh astutely points out, Mariutka is more than her social class; her class consciousness, while important, does not wholly determine her identity. Freilikh argues that Chukhrai's decision to bring a full-bodied character to the screen made the tragedy compelling.[12] The final scene, in which Mariutka clutches passionately to the body that was both the source of her sorrow and her joy, eloquently illustrates her heartbreak. Chukhrai's adaptation, then, denounces portrayals of reality in which choices are apparent and contradictions are nonexistent. In that sense, Mariutka's appearance in and of itself radically reconfigured not only the ways in which Soviet women were portrayed, but also revolutionized the legitimacy of the individual and his/her right to personal agency.

The profundity of this shift is most clearly visible in the orthodox Chinese Communist Party's refusal to release *The Forty-first* in China. On November 29, 1958, a Soviet official, N. G. Sudarikov, reported on an unpleasant meeting with the Chinese Deputy Minister of Culture, Comrade San Yan.[13] The Chinese spokesperson made it clear that his Ministry of Culture, though a devoted supporter and importer of Soviet films, refused to show Chukhrai's movie to Chinese audiences because of the romance between the Red Army female sniper and the White Army officer. San Yan condemned Mariutka: "After she shot him while he was trying to escape, she throws away her gun and embraces the bandit. The film shows that love is higher than class consciousness and politics. That's the outlook of a bourgeois individual."[14] Although this type of narrow ideological reading existed in Soviet

[12] S. I. Freilikh, "Pravo na tragediu," *Iskusstvo kino* 12 (1956): 13.

[13] The summary of the entire exchange between N. G. Sudarikov and San Yan can be found in RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 80, ll. 81-83.

[14] The reaction of the Chinese official was similar to that of Boris Lavrenev's critics when the novella was first published in 1924. The author's critics could not understand why Mariutka was crying over the body of a

circles as well, the majority of Soviet critics celebrated Mariutka's humanity and her gentle femininity.

Soviet commentators marveled at how Mariutka's affection for a White Guardsman transformed her from a hardened warrior to an individual negotiating a complex, paradoxical world of emotion. The daily *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, for example, praised the actress playing Mariutka for realistically "transforming a rough and rude girl into a tender and gentle woman."[15] The daily *Izvestiia* noted in a similar vein that the most convincing, touching scenes depict Mariutka caring after the unconscious White-Guard officer as he battles fever and delirium. The reviewer wondered aloud: "From where does this girl, hardened by the fires of war, attain her maternal affection, her tenderness? What is the source of her radiant glow and her seemingly unending tenderness in her gaze?"[16] Even the no-nonsense Khrushchev liked the movie so much that he ordered the film be sent to Cannes in 1957, where it won a special prize for best adaptation and exceptional camerawork.

The controversy surrounding *The Forty-first* becomes all the more understandable when Mariutka is placed alongside the socialist realist paradigm of Soviet femininity: Pelageia Nilovna Vlasova, the protagonist of Maksim Gor'kii's novel *Mother*.[17] Set in the early 1900s, the novel traces Pelageia's evolution from a politically ignorant, illiterate wife of a factory worker to a class-conscious revolutionary. Pelageia's unconditional love for her son, who leads the socialist underground movement, propels her toward ideological

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White Guard officer, an enemy of the proletariat. The open-ended finale earned him the ideologically compromising label "fellow traveler," signifying his dubious commitment to the communist cause.

[15] K. Akhtyrskii, "Sorok pervyi," *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, October 27, 1956, p. 3.

[16] V. Gerasimova, "Krasota pravdy," *Izvestiia*, October 18, 1956, p. 5.

[17] In 1926 V. Pudovkin adapted M. Gor'kii's 1905 novel for the screen, and the film went on to become one of the year's most popular films. See Denise Youngblood, *Movies for the Masses: Popular Cinema and Soviet Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160.

awareness. Eventually the old mother becomes actively engaged with the revolutionary movement, smuggling propaganda pamphlets. At the end of the novel, tsarist gendarmes kill the heroine as she attempts to distribute her son's damning critique of the tsarist regime. Gor'kii describes the woman's last moments in graphic and moving detail:

> She snatched her hand away from the gendarmes and caught hold of the doorpost.
> "You will not drown the truth in seas of blood…!"
> They struck her hand.
> "You heap up only malice on yourself, you unwise ones! It will fall on you…!"
> Somebody seized her neck and began to choke her. There was a rattle in her throat.[18]

While the development of political consciousness dominates Pelageia's story, it plays a modest and ambiguous role in Mariutka's life. When Mariutka argues with the much better educated Govorukha-Otrok, her ideological proclamations sound clumsy and rehearsed. Moreover, at no point do Mariutka's propagandistic one-line slogans sway the White Guardsman. If anything, his prerevolutionary poetry proves much more intoxicating to her ears. Even Mariutka's pulling the trigger on her forty-first victim—an act that is supposed to signify unequivocal proof of her ideological maturity—is riddled with ambiguity. As soon as she shoots her "blue-eyes," she runs to embrace his lifeless body, caressing his pale face and tenderly cooing his pet name. Hardly model behavior for an unswerving Red Army sniper.

Pelageia's and Mariutka's pivotal life experiences differed as much as their respective finales. While Pelageia's last prophetic words imbue her death with greater meaning, the end of *The Forty-first* does little to aggrandize Mariutka's decision to shoot Govorukha-Otrok. Chukhrai remains silent on whether Mariutka's personal sacrifice was crucial for the war effort. Film critic Freilikh also noted that the closing moments of *The Forty-first* noticeably

[18] Maksim Gor'kii, *Mat'* (Moscow: GIZ khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1956), 307.

strayed away from the typical socialist realist depiction of a fallen hero. Freilikh observed that, in times past, the hero died in two specific ways. The barely-alive hero would pick an appropriately dramatic pose, and gaze into the symbolic bright future he died for but would not live to see. Otherwise, the viewer would witness his bravery embodied in a bronze statue attended by the hero's symbolic progeny, the young pioneers.[19] Chukhrai's motion picture makes no allusions to the future, keeping focus on the present. As the film concludes with a shot of light waves washing up on the island's sandy beach, the moviegoer is left to contemplate the fate of the lovers rather than the outcome of the Civil War.

By making Mariutka's psychological struggle central to the narrative, Chukhrai broke the ideological taboo of imbuing personal experiences with historical relevance. In fact, *The Forty-first* directed the moviegoers' attention to the heroine's tragedy rather than her Civil War participation. In stark contrast to World War II heroines, whose personal losses compel them to join the Red Army ranks and fight the Nazi invader, Mariutka's grief actually stunts her. As Mariutka leans over her lover's body, the Civil War fades from view almost entirely; its outcome is no longer as important as the couple's tragic end. Time stops both for Mariutka and for the audiences. With a masterful reversal of socialist realist tradition, Chukhrai made the Civil War a mere backdrop to a heartrending love story. For the first time since Stalin's death, romance became the central object of investigation instead of being sidelined as a perfunctory narrative device or subplot.

Veronika, the protagonist of Mikhail Kalatozov's 1957 feature *The Cranes are Flying*, advanced Mariutka's legacy in breaking down accepted norms about femininity and the significance of the personal in narrating national histories. Veronika's story caused even greater controversy than Mariutka's since her biography, tied as it was to World War II,

[19] Freilikh, "Pravo," 25.

challenged moviegoers' own recollections of the war. The female lead of the award-winning and internationally-acclaimed motion picture became known as the first "negative hero" (*nepolozhitel'nii geroi*) of Soviet cinema. Veronika's chief crime was her infidelity to her fiancé Boris, who had left Moscow to volunteer on the front line and fight against the German invaders. Shaken by the loss of both her parents and demoralized by Boris's uncertain fate, Veronika succumbs to the aggressive advances of Boris's odious cousin Mark and marries him shortly thereafter. The movie traces Veronika's fall from grace as she struggles to come to terms with her infidelity. In the end, however, she is symbolically reintegrated into the Soviet collective as she adopts an orphan by the name of Boris and is portrayed in the final scene handing out flowers to the returning soldiers on the last day of war.

Veronika evoked strong emotions among both party officials and moviemakers because Kalatozov portrayed his heroine in a way that made it difficult not to empathize with her plight. Judging by contemporary reactions to the film, Kalatozov succeeded in forcing audiences to contemplate Veronika's betrayal of Boris rather than condemn her. Kalatozov's daring was all the more impressive since the dominant androcentric narrative had depicted female fidelity as a key symbol of a woman's allegiance to the state and the nation. Film critic M. Turovskaia notes in her review that during war a woman's faithfulness to her partner symbolized a victory of the human spirit over the forces of death and destruction. She accuses the scriptwriter V. Rozov of shying away from tackling a problem of this magnitude, focusing instead "on the pettiness of psychological breakdowns" (*meloch' dushevnykh izlomov*).[20] As Turovskaia points out, there was no place in socialist realism for heroines who

[20] M. Turovskaia, "Da i net," *Iskusstvo kino* 12 (1957): 15.

suffer stress, depression, and anxiety during the nation's historical turning points. Put simply, Turovskaia saw Veronika's reaction as appallingly self-indulgent and anti-Soviet.

Unsurprisingly, the same Chinese delegation that refused to import *The Forty-first* also objected to Veronika and would not permit screenings of *Cranes* in the People's Republic of China (PRC). During the exchange on November 1958, Chinese Deputy Minister of Culture Comrade San Yan interpreted the story in strictly ideological terms, claiming: "The plot is not only uniquely un-Soviet, but it also fails to demonstrate the typical character traits of a true Soviet individual. Why is Veronika talking about losing her purpose in life . . . ? Why? On what grounds did she lose sight of the meaning of life?" The Chinese representative judged the movie according to standards Soviet critics would have themselves used only four years earlier while Stalin was still alive. In the Stalinist worldview, Veronika could not have acted in the way she did because she was, after all, "a person born under Soviet rule and as such could not be as hopeless." Additionally, San Yan was appalled that the scriptwriter never condemns the female protagonist, but sympathizes with her, expecting the same reaction from the viewer.[21] Much like with Mariutka in *The Forty-first*, Veronika had to be censured and her choices repudiated in order to provide audiences with a clear lesson in acceptable communist behavior.

The uproar surrounding Veronika is best understood when we contrast her to a woman who became the paragon of feminine virtue during the Second World War: Zoia Kosmodem'ianskaia. The story of the eighteen-year-old Zoia first captivated national attention on January 27, 1942, when *Pravda* published an article about her gruesome execution. Next to a piece describing her valiant refusal to cooperate with her Nazi captors

[21] RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 80, l. 81.

was a stirring photograph of Zoia's tortured, elongated body hanging from a noose on a makeshift post, flanked by two German soldiers. The journalist praised Zoia's courage: "She betrayed neither her immense suffering nor her comrades while in captivity. She accepted a martyr's death as a heroine, as a daughter of a great nation, which will never surrender to anyone!" Literature, art, and film memorialized Zoia's death and she became a central figure in the pantheon of socialist martyrdom. In some ways, Veronika's war experiences could not compare to Zoia's. Indeed, many contemporary critics of *Cranes* protested that Veronika does not *do* anything, especially considering she finds herself in midst of a national tragedy. She does not save lives or sacrifice her own in the name of the motherland; instead, she betrays her fiancée who is fighting on the front, only to then languish and brood about the difficult fate that has befallen *her*. The cynics thus accused Veronika of committing a double sin: infidelity and patriotic passivity.

The question of motive behind Veronika's "treason" drove discussions, which focused on the moral lesson of the film. As with Mariutka, critics wondered whether the heroine of *Cranes* should be forgiven for her indiscretion. The fact that the causes of Veronika's betrayal remain ambiguous exasperated critics. Leading Soviet film critic R. N. Iurenev wondered aloud: "Veronika's love was pure, her pain deep, her memory fresh, and her faithfulness seemingly undisputable. Why did Veronika commit the act of betrayal?" Although Iurenev admits that the trauma of war and the loss of both parents partially explain Veronika's irrational infidelity, he criticized Kalatozov for not elucidating the more private, psychological reasons behind her betrayal. Despite Mark's brutish advances (Kalatozov intimates rape) and Veronika's inability to defend herself, Iurenev argues that the question

still remains, "why did she do it?"[22] Josephine Woll's incisive research of the *Cranes* confirms that "the film quite deliberately eschews explaining Veronika's decision to marry Mark: Kalatozov leaves it a mystery, for us to unravel or not as best we can."[23] Lev Anninskii also comments that it was precisely the scene in which Veronika surrenders to Mark, betraying Boris, that had contemporary critics crying "foul." He avers, however, that Soviet film critics had the right to be rattled considering that no logic can satisfactorily explain her action.[24]

The apprehension regarding the movie's heroine went beyond the movie industry and ministry offices; Veronika so dominated daily conversations that film expert I. Shilova marks the beginning of the 1960s with the release of *Cranes* in 1957. Shilova recalls: "After the viewing of the movie at the State Institute of Cinematography, the student body was divided in two opposing factions. The disbelief and shock was mutual, but the "moralists" could not, under any circumstance, accept the movie's ending and accept the author's pardon and elevation of Veronika. I, too, was among the moralists."[25] Ultimately, however, the very emotions that Veronika's critics saw as unfitting for a Soviet woman—despair, anxiousness, apathy—made her a popular figure to whom the viewers related.

The heroine of *Cranes* legitimated a more grounded interpretation of the Great Patriotic War, because Veronika added depth to the dominant heroic narrative. While Zoia symbolized the populace's intense suffering and astounding resolve, Veronika gave face to

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[22] Ibid., 12.

[23] Josephine Woll, *The Cranes are Flying* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 107.

[24] Lev Anninskii, *Shestidesiatniki i my: Kinematograf stavshii i ne stavshii istoriei* (Moscow: Kinotsentr, 1991), 40.

[25] I. Shilova, *I moe kino: Piatidesiatye, shestidesiatye, semidesiatye* (Moscow: Kinovedcheskie zapiski, 1993), 55.

the hidden everyday moments of disquiet, doubt, and misery. Like Chukhrai, Kalatozov had the courage to move beyond the aggrandizing narratives and the bombastic rhetoric. Both directors succeeded in paying homage to the sacrifices of ordinary citizens by acknowledging and legitimizing how war affected them on an intimate and psychological level. These films created momentum for discussing wartime experiences in a way that acknowledged the nation's multitude of experiences.

As Woll observes, Veronika was subsequently instrumental in shaping the movies that came out in terms of allowing for more complicated, multi-dimensional celluloid characters. It was not only Soviet audiences that accepted and sympathized with Veronika's story. The lead actress of *Cranes*, the beautiful Tat'iana Samoilova, who was frequently identified with her role, took Europe by storm. Following its victory at the Cannes Film Festival, earning the event's most prestigious Grand Prize in 1958 (only a year after *The Forty-first* gained critical acclaim at the same event) the world celebrated the film's main protagonist. Woll notes that the French *Liberation* commentator, for example, "approvingly contrasted Samoilova's purity and authenticity with that Western female icon, Brigitte Bardot."[26] Samoilova even remembered receiving a watch from her East German fans during a festival there; the gift featured the inscription: "Finally we see on the Soviet screen a face, not a mask."[27]

Thus Mariutka and Veronika represented both a harbinger and quintessence of the Thaw. Their suffering was not ridiculed as unbecoming of a Soviet person. Their infidelity did not define their personalities as critics no longer dismissed their private sufferings as trivial petit-bourgeois indulgence. Retrospectively, film critic Irina Shilova describes

[26] Woll, *Cranes*, 77.

[27] Ibid.

Veronika's ultimate impact in the following way: "The actress's face, her figure, her black sweater—all of it testified to the emergence of new models, the bourgeoning of new ideals of this new time."[28] Both *The Forty-first* and *Cranes* thus proved central in redefining the status of individual, idiosyncratic experiences within a collectivist context and ultimately broadened depictions of masculinity.

De-Gendering *Byt* and Domesticating the Soviet Man

While *Cranes* and *Forty-first* cardinally altered the representation of war as a quintessential masculine environment by legitimizing the individual and ahistorical perspective, another set of movies placed a high premium on the personal and domestic lives of their protagonists. By 1956 a significant number of filmmakers began critically examining seemingly mundane events in the lives of their contemporaries and turning their attention to the world of human emotion. Rather than focus on events of historic proportions and larger-than-life heroes, reformist directors sought to problematize seemingly ordinary occurrences and feelings. In doing so, Thaw-era film industry expanded the contours of Soviet subjectivity, which had until this time marginalized domesticity and trivialized intrapersonal relationships. Up until Stalin's death, intellectual and political elites privileged traditionally male spheres (industry, construction, and warfare) over the stereotypically female ones (child-rearing and housekeeping). From the very beginning of the Bolshevik project, intellectual and political elites constructed *byt* (the Russian expression for everyday existence) as quintessentially feminine and, as such, secondary to the construction of a socialist state.

[28] Ibid., 57.

Not only did the authorities and the intelligentsia cast *byt* as an apolitical (and, as such, inferior) set of activities but also classified it as inimical to socialist construction. Everything related to the domestic sphere—marital duties, childcare, and consumerism—were seen as distraction to the socialist construction which involved constructing hydro damns and beating world flight records. For the first forty years of Bolshevik rule, artists portrayed everyday routines as "organized efforts to . . . sabotage previous progress."[29] Soviet novels, poems, and films contrasted the corrosive qualities of the feminine *byt* with the creative nature of "masculine" projects.

Because the state almost unconditionally favored traditionally masculine activities, women's equality came to be measured by the numerical absorption of women into traditionally male spheres of activity. So total was the privileging of non-domestic realms that even childbirth gained significance only when compared to a masculine endeavor. For instance, a manual from 1952 gave this piece of advice to expecting mothers: "Like a soldier in the heat of battle, who is borne up by the thought of moving even onward, so a woman dreaming of a child feels no pain when giving birth."[30] Even when the authorities propagated a cult of motherhood in the late 1930s and 1940s due to sharply declining birthrates, women were expected to excel in both the domestic and professional sphere because of perennial labor shortages.[31] As a result, "the Soviet woman was to be fusion of worker, wife, and mother—a graceful and gracious Soviet woman, bathed in the light of a never-setting sun."[32]

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[29] Benjamin M. Sutcliffe, *The Prose of Life: Russian Women Writers from Khrushchev to Putin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 9.

[30] Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 251.

[31] For a discussion on the Stalinist cult of motherhood see David L. Hoffmann, "Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context," *Journal of Social History* 34 (2000): 35-54. For works detailing women's participation in the public sphere see Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates*:

By the beginning of the 1960s, Soviet filmmakers began to reconsider the nature of *byt* in the Soviet context. As the authorities made good on their promise to provide the populace with a more comfortable existence and broadly legitimized the right of Soviet citizens to a modicum of privacy, directors responded with new representations of domestic life. By tackling problems tied to the familial and romantic contexts, the majority of Thaw films complicated the heretofore one-dimensional depictions of *byt* in two crucial ways. First, *byt* became the primary battleground for socialism. No longer relegated to the sidelines as it had been under Stalin, domestic life ceased being the exclusive domain of women. In fact, celluloid heroes began proving themselves in terms of how well they navigated the demands of home life; breaking production records and fighting wars became no more important than being a loyal husband, respected neighbor, and supportive father. Together with their female counterparts, male protagonists became central to ensuring that the private sphere supported the goal of building a communist society.

Second, Thaw cinema depicted romantic relationships as a fundamental and positive aspect of a Soviet man's life. The post-Stalinist narratives eschewed portraying celluloid heroes as patriarchs governing the feminine *byt*, focusing instead on how domestic life promoted personal growth for male and female characters alike. In contrast to the Stalinist tradition of using romance as a perfunctory plot device, Khrushchev-era moviemakers' attention to dating, marriage, and family life diversified the ways in which men could self-

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Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia *(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002);* Elena Shulman, "Soviet Maidens for the Socialist Fortress: The Khetagurovite Campaign to Settle the Far East, 1937-39," *The Russian Review*, 62 (2003): 387-410; Tom Schrand, "Soviet 'Civic-minded Women' in the 1930s: Class, Gender, and Industrialization in a Socialist Society," *Journal of Women's History*, 11 (1999): 126-50; Choi Chatterjee, *Soviet Heroines and Public Identity, 1930-1939*, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies no. 1402 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999)*;* Matt F. Oja, *From* Krestianka *to* Udarnitsa, *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies no. 1203* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996).

[32] See Kelly, *Women's Writing*, 231.

actualize. In addition to the figure of the sage male elder, men's true partners now included their girlfriends, fiancées, wives, and mothers. Reformist directors also showed how an intimate bond between a man and woman could be much more substantive than the tie the hero shared with the collective or with other men. Many productions even featured female protagonists standing by their men despite the collective's ostracism of them.

The film industry's legitimization of the personal and domestic anticipated (and was in turn validated by) the official preoccupation with the notion of a "communist morality" that occupied a central place in the New Party Program Khrushchev announced at the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961. The First Secretary insisted that the dialectical development of society and the achievement of communism cannot be attained without a shared code of ethics and behavior. The twelve points of the *Moral Code of the Builder of Communism* insisted on honesty, a collectivist mindset, and modesty in public and private life while simultaneously condemning parasitism, dishonesty, political apathy, careerism, and materialistic attitudes. [33]

Official channels insisted those ethical standards be applied in both communal and domestic settings. For instance, *Pravda* reported on a Riazan' workers' conference that addressed the implementation and daily observance of the code. One of the participants, mechanic M. A. Lapin, was quoted as saying: "The Soviet people's personal lives are

[33] There has been a growing interest in questions of the government's attempts to regulate daily life in the post-Stalin period. See Susan E. Reid, "Cold War in the Kitchen: Gender and the De-Stalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union Under Khrushchev," *Slavic Review* 61(2002): 211-52 and her "Destalinization and Taste, 1953-1963," *Journal of Design History* 10 (1997): 177-201; and Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). For the most extensive monograph on Khrushchev-era notions of privacy and practices associated with it see Deborah A. Field, *Private Life and Communist Morality in Khrushchev's Russia* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007). For family life under Khrushchev see Laurie Bernstein, "Communist Custodial Contests: Adoption Rulings in the USSR after the Second World War," *Journal of Social History* 34 (2001): 843-61. Also see Vladimir Shlapentokh, *Private and Public Life of the Soviet People: Changing Values in Post-Stalin Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

inseparable from their production activities. Some members of our collective drink a lot. They think this is their own personal business. But did they ever consider that a drunkard is a poor worker and that he causes his family, especially his children, to suffer?"[34] De-Stalinization, therefore, implied not only discrediting the Stalinist ethos but also creating a moral order in which a sense of personal responsibility and an individual's conscience became indispensable to the realization of communism.[35]

The authorities stressed that the party's administrative and managerial role must not eclipse its pedagogical and civilizing mission. At the 1963 Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, participants iterated the necessity of reaching workers' minds *and* hearts. In his keynote address, a secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee, L. F. Il'ichev, contended that a successful fulfillment of any economic plan must be accompanied by the management's compassionate attention to its workers. Il'ichev emphasized: "The party rejects the position that economic targets be fulfilled at any price. After all, even a capitalist can effectively organize a factory line. For a Soviet manager, meeting production quotas cannot be more important than bettering people."[36] Although the party gave itself permission to police the population's daily activities, it was at pains to regulate the behavior of its citizens.

Reformist directors exploited the official rhetoric on "communist morality" to effectively combat detractors who experienced movies about dysfunctional families as a libel

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[34] N. Antonov, "Razgovor po dusham," *Pravda,* June 2, 1962, p. 2.

[35] As Philip Boobbyer's research reveals, the reformist intelligentsia privilegized personal conscience over an officially mandated ethos during de-Stalinization. He argues: "Indeed, after 1953, there was something of a general offensive by intellectuals against class morality in support of universal and to a certain extent Christian values in order to prevent the population sinking into moral degradation. A 'rebirth of conscience' took place in the cultural sphere." See Philip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 66.

[36] RGANI), f. 2, op. 1, d. 635, l. 59.

against the Soviet system and socialist reality. The intelligentsia framed controversial films as a deliberation about moral questions the Khrushchev leadership stressed as crucial to the construction of a communist society. Thus official concern for moral values and the intelligentsia's desire to realistically document the lives of their contemporaries enabled a reconceptualization of *byt* as a central component of post-Stalinist masculinity. In the remainder of this section I will explore films that feature the rising status of women as men's mentors and links to collective life, and then turn my attention to productions that portray domestic life as central to the hero's self-definition.

To present romantic relationships as an essential ingredient to a hero's evolution, I have chosen three films that took the box office by storm and launched the careers of its leading actors. *When the Trees Were Tall* (Kogda derev'ia byli bol'shimi) received critical acclaim in 1962, attracted a sizeable audience of twenty-one million viewers, and boosted actor Iu. Nikulin's career. Viia Artmane, the heroine of *Blood Relations* (Rodnaia krov'), became a national star after the movie opened and approximately 30,000 readers of the popular cinema magazine *Sovetskii ekran* voted as best actress of 1964. The movie itself became one of the year's four most popular movies, drawing an audience of approximately forty million. Over forty million Soviet viewers also crowded to see *Trust Me, Folks!* (Ver'te mne, liudi!), making it the second most watched movie of 1965. The celluloid relationships shown in these three films clearly resonated with audiences and critics alike; both the popular and critical excitement about these productions illustrates the extent to which the gendering of these narratives tapped into changing attitudes toward depictions of Soviet domestic life.

The heroine of L. Kulidzhanov's 1962 film *When the Trees Were Tall* is a modest girl named Natasha whose main personality traits are charity and kindness. A contemporary

movie critic N. Lordkipanidze described Natasha by saying: "At no point does the director attempt to film her from an angle that would make her different and turn her into a beauty. He's not tempted, even though making her attractive would prove easy; the actress's face is expressive, her smile charming, and her eyes simply delightful." Natasha's modest countenance matches her humble life. The reviewer opined on Natasha's potential: "It is difficult to explain the source of Natasha's likeability. She does not commit any particular feats and she demonstrates no exceptional intellect as her observations and comments are rather ordinary. She works conscientiously and that's pretty much it."[37] For Lordkipanidze, Natasha's spiritual tact, honesty, and grace redeemed her lack of superheroic qualities. Despite her average appearances and ordinary personality, Natasha acts as an agent of change: her "ordinary" patience and compassion transform the life of a man who unexpectedly bursts into her life.

Natasha grew up as an orphan after the war, having been separated from her parents at an early age. She wanted nothing more than to belong to someone, to experience the joys of being someone's child, someone's daughter. Suddenly, a man appears in Natasha's small village, claiming to be her father. The young woman is so overjoyed that she welcomes this stranger, Kuz'ma Iordanov, into her home and life without reservation or doubt. Kuz'ma, however, is neither her father nor an honest man. He serendipitously heard about Natasha and her story from an old woman who had since left the village. Fearing the police because of his conman profile, he pretends to be Natasha's father, seeking free shelter and sustenance until he can safely return to Moscow. Humorous mistaken-identity situations abound in this well-constructed scenario, but the larger theme of Kuz'ma's transformation remains ever-present.

[37] N. Lordkipanidze, "Svoi vzgliad," *Iskusstvo kino* 4 (1962): 10.

Can he turn the corner? Can Natasha change her "father" from a dishonest loafer into an upright citizen?

Natasha not only influences Kuz'ma's conversion but does so without doing much of anything. G. Medvedev, in his review article "What happened to Kuz'ma Iordanov?" answers his own rhetorical question: "His adoptive daughter Natasha is such a pure and honest person that Kuz'ma is not able to take advantage of her thoughtfulness and her tenderness while remaining a parasite, a good-for-nothing liar."[38] Film critic G. Kapralov also notes that Natasha rarely or directly reprimands Kuz'ma. Nonetheless, her every gesture indicates her fervent hope that her father is the best father, that he will, ultimately, not disappoint her.[39] Reviewer N. Lordkipanidze takes it so far as to say that Natasha, "the simplest of girls," possesses the kind of untainted conviction that commands respect and requires absolute surrender. All three reviewers interpreted Natasha in nearly spiritual language; she appears as an angelic personality in Kuz'ma's life, making his spiritual make-over only a matter of time. Even when the errant father admits to Natasha that he is neither her father nor an honest man, she refuses to believe him. Having confessed, Kuz'ma can return to being a parent, but this time acts in a way that his daughter can be proud of him.

Kuz'ma's transformation thus depended on Natasha's unconditional support, her faith in him, and her unquestionable goodness. These traits empower the daughter, making her an example worthy of emulation. As such, she symbolizes a conduit between her father and the collective. Without her, Kuz'ma would remain segregated from society, trapped by his laziness and dishonesty. But as the title of Kapralov's review boldly proclaims: "Isolation is out of the question!" Although the collective shuns Kuz'ma and although Natasha recognizes

[38] G. Medvedev, "Chto sluchilos' s Kuz'moi Iordanovym?" *Sovetskii ekran* 1 (1962): 8.

[39] G. Kapralov, "Odinochestvo—iskliucheno," *Sovetskii ekran* 6 (1962):13.

all his shortcomings, she cannot but see his potential. In a charged altercation between the kolkhoz chairman and Kuz'ma, Natasha defends her father against accusations that he unconscionably abuses her benevolence by living off of her. In this scene it becomes clear that the young woman notices her father's deficiencies but, unlike the village collective, can see the (better) person behind all the failings. In contrast to the kolkhoz chairman's moralizing and threats, Natasha leads by example and restrains herself from "educating" Kuz'ma on the finer points of communist morality. The young woman's intuitively emotive, empathetic approach eventually proves much more successful than the moralistic preaching and shaming Kuz'ma suffers at the hands of the kolkhoz leadership and residents.

I. Gurin and V. Berenshtein's 1964 motion picture *Trust Me, Folks!* features an even more literal transformation of an errant man detached from society by the help of a saintly woman. The action takes place in 1956, immediately after the Twentieth Party Congress, when the first wave of rehabilitations begins. The protagonist of the film is Lekha Lapin, one of the first benefactors of de-Stalinization. Lapin's biography reveals a tragic fate of a man who endured two stints in the Gulag. He spent much of his youth in a camp because both his parents served sentences as "enemies of the people." After his initial release, he lands back in prison because of criminal activities. In 1956, with only several months left to his sentence, he looks forward to becoming a person with a passport and a real name. His plans go awry, however, when he becomes implicated in an escape scheme in which he had no part. Rather than attempting to clear his name with the authorities, he flees across the frozen tundra, hoping to emerge alive and attain his dreamed-of freedom. Once in Leningrad, he has no choice but to return to the criminal life he tried so hard to escape. In seeking a safe and inconspicuous home for himself, he stumbles across a household consisting of a single

mother, Nina, her father, and her daughter. Nina and Lapin eventually develop feelings for each other and begin living like man and wife.

Nina's kindness and affection come unexpectedly for Lapin, who had, up till then, rarely experienced such unconditional support. Reviewer V. Pogostina notes that Lapin's attraction to the heroine further uncovers his genuine personality and temperament. Nina is special in that she, like Natasha, possesses the innate capability of believing her man and seeing him for what he really is.[40] Lapin, however, fears that his secret will endanger the idyllic life he started. His worst fears are realized when a special night out on the town leads him straight to his law enforcement persecutors. Wanting to treat his beloved to a romantic outing, he procures tickets to the theatre which is (ironically) reserved for the police that evening. Although his instincts tell him to flee once he enters a hall full of police officers, he stays next to Nina, hoping he might go unnoticed in the sea of faces, praying that his new-found relationship might outlast this ordeal. However, the inspector in charge of Lapin's case, Comrade Anokhin, recognizes the "most wanted" fugitive and approaches him in the lobby during intermission, suggesting he give himself up peacefully. Pleading his case and promising Anokhin he will turn himself in on Monday, Lapin beseeches to be given the weekend to say goodbye to Nina. Noted film critic Pogostina interpreted the policeman's clemency as a sign of the officer's insightfulness: "Anokhin's conversation with Lapin in the foyer conclusively persuades him that Lapin was indeed saved by his loving relationship."[41]

Lapin returns to his seat and rejoins Nina, entirely unsure how to confess his past without spoiling what they had built together. Like Kuz'ma, he cannot bring himself to hurt a woman who delivered him from a life of crime and gave him a second lease on life. Unable

[40] V. Pogostina, "Stat' chelovekom," *Iskusstvo kino* 3 (1965): 40.

[41] Ibid., 39.

to face her and confess his sins, Lapin initially tries to run away, but Nina chases after him, wanting to stay by him despite his past. After a heart-wrenching parting, Lapin turns himself in and is sentenced to prison. Although it seems he might be incarcerated indefinitely, the final scene suggests that Nina, while cheerless, has resolved to wait for Lapin and support him in the meantime.

Nina, like Natasha, is a simple, rather average, woman in both conduct and appearance whose inner goodness outweighs her ordinariness. Reviewers laud her for unwaveringly supporting her man and for her ability to see his true colors. Interestingly, her approach dovetails with Inspector Anokhin's view of human nature. As a government official, he embodies the post-Stalinist state's more humane approach to, and optimistic view of, human character. To accentuate the changing attitudes toward society's "outsiders," the directors juxtapose the smartly dressed, Europeanized Anokhin to a colleague clad in an austere military uniform, whose cynical and suspicious mentality appear sorely out of touch. In this sense Nina and Anokhin share the conviction that, if treated fairly, people can be trusted to do the right thing. Anokhin's military associate berates him for not arresting the culprit on the spot, but the inspector remains convinced that Lapin will not betray him and turn himself in as promised. The young inspector therefore illustrates the filmmakers's belief that Soviet citizens, if approached rationally and dealt with equitably, will respond in kind.

In contrast to *Trees* and *Trust*, M. Ershov's 1963 film *Blood Relations* does not feature a woman's ability to rehabilitate an undesirable social element, but still poignantly shows the extent to which Thaw cinema glamorized "ordinary" relationships and an "ordinary" woman's effect on a man. This romantic drama begins during World War II, when Fedotov, a soldier on a ten-day leave, serendipitously meets Sonia, a hard-working,

single mother of three who had to flee the Baltic from the invading Germans. The two fall in love during his brief time off, and Fedotov returns to Sonia and her family after the war's end. However, two events shake up the family: Sonia's sudden death and the reappearance of the children's biological father. Having heard of his ex-wife's death, the biological father comes to claim the children after years of absence and neglect. Fedotov has no option but to let the children decide their own fate. Two of the three children decide to stay with their stepfather, acknowledging that, despite their passports and despite the law, they feel tied to their adoptive parent by bonds stronger than blood.

As with the two other films, *Blood Relations* details Fedotov's evolution and maturation as a husband and father. At the beginning, of the film Fedotov is an ordinary Ivan, a soldier like millions of others. Yet, by the end, it becomes evident that marriage and fatherhood transform him, providing him with meaning and structure within a postwar society. Fedotov's love for Sonia—a perfect stranger—and his willingness to be a father to her three children ultimately enable him to make a smooth transition from wartime to peacetime.[42] The understatedly beautiful Sonia provides Fedotov a sense of belonging in the midst of the war and a sense of purpose when he returns from the front. In fact, Fedotov's encounter with Sonia emerges as one of the important moments of his army service.

Blood Relations thus put forward an idealized depiction of postwar life, establishing marital and familial life as a stabilizing social force. More than a simple love story, the movie spells out the outlines of the postwar "Soviet dream." Like its American counterpart, the Soviet dream included a picture-perfect nuclear family that never went wanting. Thus the images of men became more tightly associated with family life, not just as breadwinners or authority figures but also as caretakers. Because the Stalinist regime was much more

[42] N. Igant'eva, "Nastoiashchee," *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1964): 83.

concerned with reconstructing the national economy in the immediate postwar period, the image of a warm, affectionate, domesticated Soviet patriarch never dominated official rhetoric. By the 1960s, however, the regime's stress on material wellbeing offered fertile ground for the emergence of a celluloid hero whose masculinity (and happiness) was tied to the domestic sphere. *Blood* thus captures the significance both popular and official audiences attached to wholesome family life as the cornerstone for personal happiness and social harmony.

When the movie came out, the reviewers extolled Sonia and Fedotov's marriage as an accurate representation of all that is best about Soviet life. The union between a brave soldier and a hardworking worker struck a chord with reviewers. Critic G. Kremlev, for instance, opined that, though these protagonists do not distinguish themselves by appearance or deed from millions of other Soviet citizens, their appeal and mutual attraction lie in their spiritual wealth.[43] Praising Sonia in her review, N. Ignat'eva accentuated the heroine's self-possession: "Sonia's charm is most likely the result of her calmness and her innate ability to experience even the most unexpected of events without losing her composure. She has it hard with three children, but you'll never hear her complain."[44] These traits attract Fedotov to Sonia as he readjusts to civilian life. Sonia eases Fedotov's transition back into civilian life so much so that his military past rarely emerges after his demobilization. He rarely mentions his combat experience, his social life does not include other veterans, and the apartment shows no signs of military memorabilia; Fedotov's domestic and familial existence eclipses his wartime participation. For his part, Fedotov more than completes the family unit; he fulfills his paternal role so admirably that his stepchildren take him for their own father.

[43] G. Kremlev, "Kuda denutsia deti?," *Sovetskii ekran* 1 (1964): 8.

[44] N. Igant'eva, "Nastoiashchee," *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (1964): 83.

Heroes at Home

However much filmmakers pondered and extolled the stabilizing effect of marriage and family life on Soviet masculinity, they also depicted how celluloid heroes handled the darker sides of home life. As much as these popular three motion pictures emphasized the transformative potential of domesticity, other directors showed that the New Soviet Man could not always successfully manage problems arising in his domicile. The challenges the protagonist faced at home suggested that he could not always be in charge of his own life. In the majority of these motion pictures, directors reflected on the limitations of a man's ability to affect his immediate surroundings.

In contrast to Stalin-era heroes, whose victories happened at the warfront, on the North Pole, or on the factory floor, Khrushchev-era heroes had to score victories in domesticated spaces that had no fail-safe rules. And while Stalinist supermen effortlessly led entire factories and army regiments to fight for the communist cause, Thaw protagonists faced an uphill battle to inspire their immediate family members to action. Thus the next two films to be discussed—*Alien Kin* and *Noisy Day*—symbolize a larger cinematic trend that established post-Stalinist heroes as imperfect and ineffective patriarchs. Moreover, the Thaw scenarios challenged the notion that problems associated with the private sphere lend themselves to easy solutions.

At first glance, M. Shveitser's 1955 motion picture *Alien Kin* represents a straightforward condemnation of anti-communal and materialistic attitudes. Upon closer inspection, however, the film distinguishes itself from archetypal socialist realist narratives in that the model hero scores few victories in trying to convert his materialistic wife. Even the movie's finale only ambiguously portends the heroine's transformation.

Whereas Stalin-era collective farm films end with a wedding, Shveitser's kolkhoz story begins with one. Contesting the Stalinist tradition of signifying a happy-ever-after finale with a Hollywoodesque wedding celebration, Shveitser's marriage ceremony foreshadows a rocky start for the kolkhoz's latest newlyweds, Fedor and Stesha. The pair's marital problems begin soon after the groom moves in with his in-laws. Although household members start off on a cordial note, it soon becomes apparent that the Riashkins have a decidedly anti-collectivist attitude. The father-in-law casually confesses his opposition to the kolkhoz: "If you refuse to participate—you're no good. If you agree—you end up cheating yourself." As time goes on, Fedor increasingly observes that his in-laws' insatiable greed motivates their every move and inevitably hurts the collective farm. As one of the kolkhoz brigade leaders, Fedor has to consciously fight the impulse to publicly rebuke his wife's parents for their un-communist and materialistic mentality.

The conflict comes to a head when Stesha's father refuses to give up one of his horses for a village-wide effort to fulfill the plan in record time. As soon as Fedor finds out about his in-laws' self-centeredness, he marches to the house to retrieve the horse. When he returns, he encounters a hostile reception. Furious, Stesha accuses him of betraying his own kin, placing the benefit of strangers above his own family's interests. The argument becomes so heated that Fedor storms out of the house, not sure what to do. He loves his new bride so much he does not want to leave her, but knows he cannot continue living under her parents' roof. He knows he has a chance to "reeducate" Stesha although he feels the only way to do that would be to remove her from her family. Stesha eventually persuades her husband to return by telling him she is pregnant. For the sake of the child, Fedor goes back but the troubles do not end as he becomes more and more alienated from his "kin." After several

similar altercations the hero moves into a dorm because he feels he is compromising his conscience by staying under his in-laws' roof.

Stesha, egged on by her parents, decides to shame Fedor publicly, hoping the collective will defend the interests of a pregnant woman and insist he return "home." Visibly pregnant, she confronts her neighbors as they prepare to go to work. In front of the entire community, Stesha vilifies her husband for abandoning her in her time of need. She depicts herself as a woman left to her own devices precisely at a time when she needs her spouse's support the most. She uses pregnancy as a bargaining chip, employing her knowledge of Soviet society's intolerance of runaway fathers. Despite their sympathies, the members of the collective does not trust Stesha's accusations since she never integrated into kolkhoz life. Unsatisfied with the lack of reaction, Stesha goes to the Komsomol authorities, weeping to the officer in charge.

Sympathetic to the plea of the deserted expectant woman, Comrade Glazycheva convenes a meeting with the aim of shaming the husband to return to his wife. At the meeting Fedor calmly defends himself, explaining: "They live in the kolkhoz but dislike it. Had I stayed any longer, tolerating their avarice for the sake of marital bliss, I would have acquired their miserliness." Glazycheva quickly retorts, as if speaking from a manual on morality: "The most shameful thing about this whole situation is the fact that you have resigned yourself to failure. Have you tried to reeducate them? Probably not. The fact that your wife is not an active Komsomol member speaks volumes about your indifference to her. You were supposed to reeducate your wife, your in-laws, everybody!" Another Komsomol member, Lev Zakharych, however, comes to Fedor's aid by chastising Glazycheva for ignoring the delicacy of the case, berating her for blindly and uniformly applying the same formula to

complex interpersonal relationships. He argues: "One size does not fit all, Comrade Glazycheva. Relationships are such complicated affairs. We should focus on helping rather than determining who to punish and how to discipline."

Shveitser's film advocates Zakharych's approach since the meeting ends without any concrete solutions; the couple is left to resolve their issues independently. *Alien Kin* suggests that party institutions suffer a handicap in adjudicating personal issues since only the couple possesses all the relevant information. The movie also communicates the viewpoint that marital relations cannot be resolved in three easy steps; there is a tacit acknowledgment that irrationality, rather than common sense, governs romantic dynamics.

The ambiguous finale confirms this viewpoint. In the final scene Stesha relocates to Fedor's dorm room. The barren space—a clear departure from the clutter of her parent's home— marks the true beginning of their marriage. This collectivist environment becomes a place where Stesha can learn how to become a nurturing and giving parent. Stesha's sullen expression, however, casts a doubt on the durability of the couple's reunion and leaves the viewer wondering whether the young spouses will bridge their difference to make their union a lasting one.

Although the film presented a straightforward condemnation of self-interest, critics debated whether Fedor had done enough to reeducate his wife. One reviewer complained that members of the collective do not take a firm enough stand against the Riashkins and that even Fedor is incapable of defeating them.[45] Another critic pronounced an even harsher sentence on the hero: "Fedor Soloveikov is not a proactive, dynamic hero. He is a good worker and an honest man, but he is far from being a master of his own fate (*khoziain zhizni*) and this is why he emerges from this fight with wickedness as a purely passive character."

[45] Author unknown, "Glazami storonnego nabliudatelia," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, July 17, 1954, p. 2.

Fedor's unwillingness to convert his wife and in-laws to the communist path marks him as unsuitable for younger audiences, according to the same critic. "What kind of a positive hero does our youth expect? A popular hero, a wholesome man, who would see every day as an opportunity to wage another battle!"[46] Even the generally positive reviews maintained that Fedor's character would have been more multi-dimensional had he actively encouraged change in his wife's behavior.[47]

A lone dissenting voice, A. Petrosian countered the negative critics by accusing them of expecting unreasonable things. He asserted that Fedor would cease to be believable as soon as he turned into a moralizer and propaganda agitator. "The positive hero," argued Petrosian, "is a living individual rather than a treatise on positive heroism or a scheme that exists only in our imagination." Petrosian also argued that, though the hero propagandized little, his actions spoke volumes. He reasoned that Stesha displayed a fundamental lack of interest in bettering herself and as such would have hardly been won over by any amount of effort on Fedor's part. He concludes that those who saw Fedor as a weak hero still saw the world in Stalinist shades of black-and-white.

Petrosian's generous assessment aside, commentators asserted that Fedor's passivity made Stesha's "conversion" at the end of the film disingenuous and not very believable. The reviewers complained that the directors artificially tagged on Fedor's and Stesha's happy reunion, thus spoiling the film's literary inspiration, V. Tendriakov's 1954 novella *Like a Fish out of Water* (Ne ko dvoru). Movie critics by and large denounced the "add-on" finale as contrived and false. A. Dement'ev, for example, opined that the movie should have ended

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[46] V. Dorofeev, "Geroi v sovremennoi Sovetskoi literature," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, October 23, 1954, p. 4.

[47] Iu. Surovtsev, "Chuzhaia rodnia," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, July 27, 1954.

like the original story: with the Riashkins remaining completely isolated from their neighbors. "The daughter's rebellion [against her parents] and Riashkins' bitter loneliness—this is where the movie ends and this is where its main conflict is resolved. . . . The sentence has been passed and the score was settled."[48] Film critic R. Iurenev also remained unconvinced that Stesha had truly changed, noting that she had abused her husband too eagerly, too convincingly.[49] The same was said of Stesha in the novella; critic A. Petrosian noted that the wife treats her groom like a commodity (*zakonnoi sobstvenn'ost'iu*): "Fedor now belongs to Stesha, like everything else in her father's home."[50]

Indeed, Stesha manipulates her husband throughout the film. The hero who represents the ideal of communist morality proves too susceptible to his wife's ultimatums and emotional blackmail. At the same time, contestations over the believability of Fedor's masculinity aptly expressed the era's volatile spirit. As an early incarnation of a sensitive, empathetic masculinity, Fedor was expected to both create a harmonious domicile while at the same time demonstrating ideological zeal. Reformist directors faced the difficult task or creating heroes who fused the fervor of a political agitator and the patience of a compassionate patriarch. In other words, Thaw-era heroes were supposed to seamlessly combine revolutionary rhetoric with a "love thy neighbor as thyself" attitude. As reactions to *Alien Kin* demonstrate, the combination was anything but easy to achieve. Consequently, critics rarely approved of heroes depicted in these types of situations, alternatively classifying them as too dogmatic or too moderate in their personal dealings.

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[48] A. Dement'ev, "Vernye poiski," *Iskusstvo kino* 4 (1956): 9.

[49] R. Iurenev, "Chuzhaia rodnia," *Moskovskaia pravda*, January 21, 1956, p. 5.

[50] A. Petrosian, "O dogmatizme v kritike," *Znamia* 8 (1955): 192.

Georgii Natanson's 1960 motion picture *Noisy Day* (Shumnyi den') went a step further in depicting a broken home by ending the film on a somber note. In fact, Fedor, the head of the household finds himself unable to resolve the tension between marital concord and moral standards. What's more, his family, his immediate collective, fails to convince the errant Fedor that his true happiness lies in following a universal set of (communist) ethical principles. Despite his family's best efforts, Fedor falls victim to his wife's emotional manipulation and leaves the household.

Fedor and his wife live together with his mother, Klavdiia Vasil'evna, and his three high school-aged siblings. Although their apartment seems typical of those in Moscow's Arbat prerevolutionary neighborhood, something appears amiss. Despite ample space, furniture crowds every meter of the apartment, much of it covered with blankets and sheets. The setting produces an eerie sensation, as if the occupants have either never entirely moved in or as if they are prepared to flee at a moment's notice. Lena, Fedor's wife, who spends her days obsessively buying new furniture, ironically dares not even use it in the fear that it might become damaged. One unexpected turn of events exposes how far the beautiful and immaculately dressed Lena will go to defend her treasured possessions.

The conflict in the film begins when the family's youngest member, the high schooler Oleg, accidentally spills ink over his sister-in-law's table. Lena shrieks upon seeing her table ruined and proceeds to throw Oleg's goldfish out the apartment window. Just before she hysterically tosses his pet from the window, he screams out in despair: "But they are living creatures!" In a fit of rage, Oleg reaches for his deceased father's saber that hangs beneath his military portrait and hacks into the furniture in front of the assembled household. A

weapon that had once defended the Soviet Union's borders now symbolically and literally strikes against Lena's insatiable acquisitiveness.

This incident serves as a catalyst to expose the tension reigning over the apartment. The mother, Klavdiia Vasil'evna confronts Fedor and tells him that Lena has turned him into a petty philistine. Fedor defends himself by saying that the love he feels for his spouse inspires his actions; how could doing something in the name of love—the most exulted feeling man is capable of—turn him into a philistine? His mother reflects critically on the notion that love inspires to do only good: "Love debases man as often as it betters him." Klavdiia Vasil'evna thus problematizes Fedor's romanticized view of amorous feelings, telling him that the worst crime consists of betraying one's humanity and dignity (*izmena chelovecheskomu dostoinstvu*) rather than giving up on one's spouse.

The concerned mother also tells his son that he is now a "grown-up boy" and needs to manage his life independently. She reminds him of how she had mobilized the neighborhood, his high school peers, and the Komsomol when he had gotten himself mixed up with bad company and started drinking heavily during his freshman year. She explains to Fedor that battling his "hooliganism" with external intervention made sense then. She noted, however, that no one, save himself, can intervene to make him live up to his moral convictions now. Affected by his mother's exhortations and visible distress, Fedor promises to change. Ultimately, however, Fedor proves powerless against his wife's charm and agrees to move out. As he leaves the apartment and his family, he turns around in the street to look up at the building's windows in hopes of seeing his mother, but sees only the solemn gaze of his father's photo-portrait and the saber that dominates the dining room wall.

The cultural authorities initially expressed a mixed response to Natanson's film. Both the Minister of Culture E. A. Furtseva and the secretary of the Komsomol organization condemned the film by comparing it to Italian neorealism.[51] By making a reference to the postwar Italian film movement, Furtseva objected to the unhealthy focus on the negative and sordid aspects of Soviet life. *Noisy Day* ran counter to the tenets of socialist realism in that it did not represent life in its revolutionary development but instead unflatteringly showed the everyday. She found the cast of characters—wives that care more about furniture than about their husbands, teenagers that vent their anger by swinging sabers at credenzas, and weak-willed heads of households corrupted by materialistic spouses—to be more typical of capitalist Rome than of socialist Moscow.

Natanson insisted that the movie would enlighten youth since it highlighted the struggle against middlebrow, materialistic values. The final decision lay with the secretary of the Moscow Communist Party Committee, P. N. Demichev, who concluded that the movie presented ideas that would benefit all generations alike. The movie was, in a sense, ideologically edifying; it condemned bourgeois, middlebrow sensibility and showed its destructive influence. Natansov, however, presented the triumph of materialist concerns over communist morality. In the end, Lena wins Fedor's attention, while Klavdiia and the rest of the family prove unable to convince him of his erroneous ways. The father's saber had meted out the first blow to Lena's corrupting influence but the mother proved incapable of completing the task.

Fedor's inability to defend himself against his wife's material gluttony defines his masculinity. He himself has no need for furniture, but his failure to combat Lena's

[51] SK-Novosti. 2002. Interview with Georgii Natansov, "*'Shumnii Den'' i drugie,*" URL: http://www.film.ru/sk-news/article.asp?ID=900 Viewed: August 30, 2007.

consumerism makes him an unredeemable accomplice. A review in the popular weekly magazine, *Soviet Screen* (Sovetskii ekran) accentuated the positive implications of an open-ended finale by commenting that the mother will certainly fight for her son. The reviewer hypothesized that she is not alone in the belief that Fedor will return; "our entire family, the residents of our building, our extraordinary city" will all struggle to win him back.[52] Despite the optimistic take on the film's end, the fact remains that Natanson provided Soviet audiences with a male hero who, like Fedor in *Alien Kin*, proved defenseless when confronted with his wife's unrelenting attachment to material goods. Incapable of discouraging Lena's philistinism, Fedor succumbed to it.

Although neither Fedor in *Alien Kin* nor Fedor in *Noisy Day* belong in the pantheon of socialist realist supermen, both directors took great pains to illustrate the difficult choices facing their protagonists. Forced to choose between their marital happiness and their principles, the two Fedors demonstrate how central domestic life had become to defining Soviet masculinity. Home life and decisions made in everyday situations proved as critical to a man's identity as any challenge he tackled in the public sphere while in the company of other men. Equally as important is the fact that both films reflected a larger cinematic trend of depicting the party institutions as largely irrelevant or impotent in resolving matters of the heart. By featuring heroes who needed to fend for themselves directors not only devalued the primacy of collective wisdom, but also popularized the idea that men prove their mettle by making tough choices autonomously instead of following formulaic slogans or easy recipes for happiness supplied by father-figures.

[52] V. Merimanov "Shumnii Den'," *Sovetskii ekran* 2 (1961): 6

The Limits of the Reformist Filmmakers' Agenda

Although post-Stalinist directors broadened the range of gendered experiences on Soviet screens, they also faced obstacles in their quest. Since the Soviet population on the whole espoused conservative gender norms, Reformist directors had to adjust their artistic vision to accommodate popular perceptions of gender-appropriate behavior. Two controversial films in particular—*The Chairman* (1964) and *Wings* (1966)—illustrate the difficulties the reformist intelligentsia faced as they challenged normative views of gender. These two productions demonstrated that audiences felt more comfortable with heroes and heroines that did not deviate substantially from accepted gender norms.

Despite the fact that the filmmakers' focus on the protagonists' psychology and inner lives successfully complicated depictions of gender typical of the Stalinist period, Larisa Shepit'ko's 1966 feature *Wings* and Aleksei Saltykov's 1965 motion picture *The Chairman* exposed the limits of such experimentation. However responsive Soviet audiences appeared to be toward more sensitive heroes (a la Kuz'ma in *Trees*) and more complicated heroines (a la Veronika in *Cranes*), they still expressed a penchant for characters that epitomized traditional gender roles. These conservative attitudes made themselves evident in the moviegoers' rejection of Nadezhda, the unfeminine and brisk heroine of *Wings*, and their excitement over Egor, the macho and brutish protagonist of *The Chairman*. Although Egor and Nadezhda shared a similar biography and temperament,[53] popular reaction to Nadezhda was muted at best because, unlike the feminine Veronika or Mariutka, Nadezhda was too masculine-acting; moviegoers could not look past her unfeminine mannerisms to appreciate her striking and unique story.

[53] Both participated in and suffered personal losses during the Second World War; both received great honors at the conclusion of the war; both actively involved themselves in the day-to-day activities of their communities; and both interacted with their surroundings in a stiff, dictatorial manner.

Commenting on this unusual heroine a decade after the film's release, an encyclopedia of Soviet cinema noted the reasons why this woman caused such a stir among contemporaries: "Full of incisive observations and powerful scenes, the movie *Wings* appeals primarily because of the heroine's character. She invokes both pity and respect; she simultaneously repulses and amazes."[54] As a local World War II hero, Nadezhda plays an integral role in her community: the regional museum has an exhibit featuring her wartime valor, she heads the local vocational high school, numerous committees depend on her dutiful participation, and the local newspaper features her *feuilletons*. Although Nadezhda figures prominently in the social and political fabric of her community, the movie emphasizes her inability to truly connect to those around her. This strict-looking woman in her forties, a mother of an adopted but emotionally estranged daughter, finds it hard to establish meaningful and lasting emotional connections. Her entire countenance reflects her Spartan character: her neat but dull suit, her tidy and no-nonsense hairstyle, and her strict and unadorned face.

Nadezhda's tragedy, carefully concealed from the world, rests in her past. There are two defining elements in her life: her love for flying and her war-time lover. The movie makes clear that losing both of these passions has left this Soviet woman, whose name in Russian means hope, without much faith in a better tomorrow. In essence, Nadezhda is enslaved to a bygone time when she was truly happy. A wound she earned during the war had made her ineligible to fly again, forcing her into the realm of public service, for which she was observably unsuited. Despite the pressing concerns of building communism on earth, Nadezhda is a captive of the skies, her attention continuously drawn to the light blue expanse above her. When she looks at the sky, she cannot but think back to the time when she fought

[54] S. Ginzburg, ed., *Istoriia Sovetskogo kino*, vol. 4 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1978), 118.

the righteous fight with a man she loved, a man she saw crash in his burning plane. Together they had destroyed dozens of Nazi aircraft, defending their homeland, and shared in the beginnings of a pure romance. But once he dies, she never truly recovers.

A contemporary critic of the movie, V. Shitova, suggests in her review that that the sky does not simply symbolize Nadezhda's past but also reflects her perspective. According to Shitova, Nadezhda sees her reality "from the heights of years past, from the heights of loneliness, from the heights of losses and moments that never came to pass."[55] From this height the heroine cannot bridge the gap between herself and others—particularly the youth she was supposed to inspire. As a result, "Nadezhda heartbreakingly cannot find a common language with people surrounding her (with the youth, with her adopted daughter)."[56]

Commentators recognized *Wings* not simply as a psychological sketch of a single veteran woman, but as a comment on the wartime generation in general. Film critic I. Shilova's memoirs point out the significance of the delicate issues Shepit'ko raised with her motion picture: "The movie *Wings* forced us to take a detached look at those [veterans] who came together on Victory Day at the Bolshoi Theatre or at the Park of Culture, at our parents, at ourselves." Shilova describes the film as an affront to many sacred truths about Soviet myths depicting the sanctified World War II veterans as the so-called lost generation: "The officially revered war generation was in actuality forsaken, unfit for contemporary realities. Former intelligence officers (*razvedchiki*) and tank crew members got drunk regularly; both privates and officers were lost souls, and very few, beside themselves, wanted to hear their memories about the terrible experience of war."[57] Nadezhda's inability to cope with everyday

[55] V. Shitova, "Podrobnyi razgovor: Kryl'ia," *Iskusstvo kino* 10 (1966): 24.

[56] Ibid.

realities and her fixation on the past punctured the hallowed image of the war generation, whose identity was based on the consecrated in heroism. Like her veteran peers, Nadezhda remained a soldier in a civilian outfit. Noted filmmaker A. Zarkhi commented that the intensity of Nadezhda's military experiences ensured that she remain uniformed on the inside even after she put away the uniform. Nadezhda saw her world through the perspective of the war years and never readjusted. Her tactless brusqueness, her diatribes on matters of communist morality, and her unarticulated expressions of empathy, all made her a problematic heroine, a problematic woman.

Regardless of the film's anemic attendance rate,[58] commentators noted the furor Larisa Shepit'ko's film raised in public showings and discussions of the film. Although Nadezhda's life raised many universal issues—the theme of generational conflict, the motif of postwar reacclimatization, and the alienation in modern life—audience members were reported to have focused more on her (lack of) womanly charms than on the more substantive issues her portrait broached.[59] In his review of *Wings*, Aleksandr Shtein stated that he overheard a female moviegoer confide in her friend that such heroines irritate her. Shtein located the source of frustration in the heroine's lack of feminine grace—whether external or internal. He then praised the actress who played the lead, M. Bulgakova, for embellishing neither herself as an actress nor herself as a heroine. Shtein saw Nadezhda's defiance of gender norms as an asset rather than a liability. He explained: "She refuses to beautify

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[57] Shilova, *I moe kino*, 101.

[58] The film sold only eight million tickets.

[59] Although poorly attended, the film attracted much critical attention. The July edition of *Iskusstvo kino* featured the film's main actress, Maia Bulgakova, on its cover. That October, the same journal dedicated eighteen pages to the movie, publishing eight reviews analyzing Nadezhda's psychological portrait. The variety of critiques demonstrated the complexity of the heroine's character; the critics did not reach a consensus on either the merits of the film or the protagonist. Moreover, the richness and depth of the reviews demonstrated the profound (universal) questions *Wings* evoked in its depiction of Nadezhda's life.

herself. Unafraid, she appears older than she is. Her wrinkles are so accentuated there appears to be more of them than is actually the case. Her smile is crooked. Her tone is curt, direct, and uncompromising. And when she attempts to be more womanly she almost always fails." Shtein commented that "had the director, the main actress, or the cameraman been more compromising and conciliatory, they would have endowed the heroine with more femininity, more charm." The fact that they did not, concluded Shtein, ensured that the final product is more truthful, more authentic, and more exact.[60]

However legitimate Shtein's assertions about the film's realism, the moviegoers' frustration with Nadezhda condemned the film to box-office failure. A. Poliantseva, a former commanding officer of the 586th Aviation Fighting Squadron, harshly rejected such impersonations of female pilots—regardless of the tribulations they endured during the war. In Poliantseva's opinion, the character "initially causes confusion, then anxiety, and finally anger."[61] The reviewer asked: "Can this really be a Soviet reality? A war hero, a mother, a person showered with accolades and with respect of the Soviet people and at the same time someone with a complete lack of affection, of compassion for children, of common courtesy." Poliantseva thus equated Nadezhda's inability to adapt to the postwar environment to her inability to be an authentic woman. The former commanding officer argued that women like Nadezhda were a figment of the movie crew's imagination. Poliantseva claimed that she was not alone in her opinion. A group of female veterans that had watched *Wings*, also reacted negatively to Nadezhda as a heroine.

> "We were not crude soldiers like Nadezhda Stepanovna was! Regardless of how tough things got at the front, we always remained real women: we beautified our dugouts with flowers and white tablecloths and we even tried to slightly alter the standard soldier's

[60] Aleksandr Shtein, "Podrobnyi razgovor: Kryl'ia," *Iskusstvo kino* 10 (1966): 29.

[61] A. Poliantseva, "Podrobnyi razgovor: Kryl'ia," *Iskusstvo kino* 10 (1966): 15.

> uniform, wearing our berets, forage caps, and helmets differently than the lads did. And we were so glad to replace our uniforms with adorable skirts that we missed for four long years of war."[62]

According to this commentator, then, Nadezhda did not represent her veteran cohort and her unhappiness lay in her inability to act like a woman should, offering those around her the necessary sympathy and emotional support. To think that the scriptwriters could have met such a woman was a preposterous claim according to Poliantseva. Ia. Varshavskii noted a similar response from another female soldier who expressed her disapproval to the lead actress, Maia Bulgakova. The disaffected female veteran demanded of Bulgakova: "Why have you made Petrukhina so unfeminine? Why does she walk as if she were a soldier? You yourself are pretty; why did you make Petrukhina so unattractive? Look at my friends, other female combat pilots, and how many of them are attractive, charming women; they're women whom war did not 'toughen up' (*nichut' ne ogrubevshikh na voine*).[63]

Nadezhda's lack of femininity thus condemned the heroine to disapproval among a large segment of viewers. This becomes particularly obvious when we compare her to her male equivalent: Egor Trubnikov in Aleksei Saltykov's 1964 film *The Chairman*.[64] Egor Trubnikov's biography was quite common. A man in his fifties, he was born at the turn of the century and fought with the Bolsheviks from the beginning. He emerged from the bloodbath of the Great Patriotic War alive but handicapped; he had only one arm. Instead of retiring after the war, he returned to work in 1947 to participate in the country's reconstruction. He chose a hellish task of reviving a collective farm during a time when Soviet kolkhozes fell

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[62] Ibid., 16.

[63] Ia. Varshavskii, "Odin vopros i tysiacha otvetov," *Sovetskii ekran* 21 (1966): 7.

[64] Makar Zadorozhnyi's 1965 motion picture *Our Honest Earned Bread* (Nash chestnyi khleb) featured Trubnikov's Ukrainian counterpart. Besides enjoying great popularity, the two movies were often compared since both featured rough, plain-spoken, intimidating but principled workaholics.

between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, collective farms had to deal with the devastating effects Nazi occupation wrought on the countryside. On the other hand, the villages had to endure both crippling material and manpower shortages common during late-Stalinism. The combination of these two logistical barriers made economic revival nearly impossible. Trubnikov thus emerged as a sort of *deus ex machina*, arriving to a poverty-stricken and demoralized kolkhoz with the intent of transforming it into a prospering agricultural community.

The film garnered praise from audiences and party authorities because of its realistic depiction of postwar conditions. The kolkhoz is filled with women, whose husbands, fathers, and brothers had either died during the war or emigrated to cities, looking for an escape from their desolate and depressing rural environment. Trubnikov, as the new chairman of the kolkhoz, aims to radically alter the material conditions on the collective farm. In the majority of cases Trubnikov's methods consist of loud confrontations and regular negative feedback; his unpleasant personality and his brusque ways make any interaction with him wearisome. Movie critic E. Surkov warned that Trubnikov is not an average positive hero, that his virtues should be looked for elsewhere. The critic reminds readers that Egor did not simply return from war with only one arm; he had lost so much more: the war had destroyed his good natured naiveté. Surkov elaborated: "The war had scorched and burnt him, but it did not shake his fate and instead irreversibly fortified his character."[65] In this scenario, the ends justify the means.

In trying to describe the country's new favorite celluloid hero, *Sovetskii ekran* reporter A. Obraztsov waxeed lyrical: "They say that Egor Trubnikov is rough around the edges, that he is a recluse, that there is not an iota of warmth in him. He himself is likely to

[65] E. Surkov, "Tsena pravdy," *Iskusstvo kino* 2 (1965): 20.

say: 'I am a brutal man.' . . . Ul'ianov successfully combines in his character both tough reality and lyricism, both manliness and tenderness, both facts and inspiration."[66] In February 1965, *The Chairman* was shown to the men and women of the Kirov kolkhoz, located just outside Kalinin. The journalist and photographer from *Sovetskii ekran* were there to document people's reactions. The reporter noted the emotionally suspenseful atmosphere in the hall and the focus with which the audience absorbed the action and dialogue on the screen. Part of the discussion centered around the question of whether the situation in the countryside in 1947 was as deplorable as the movie makes it out to be. Most of the discussants testified that the scenes rang true, bringing back memories of decades past. The chairman of the kolkhoz was reported to have stated: "This movie is entirely about me. I've been doing this job for twenty-four years. I saw all kinds of things. Until now I have not seen anything more candid about rural life." Although there were critics, *Sovetskii ekran* established them as a minority, most of the moviegoers calling the movie "honest and very much needed."[67]

When tackling the problem of Trubnikov's lack of sensitivity and consideration for kolkhoz workers, audiences defended him, saying that such tenacious and strong willed men are needed in the present as much as they were needed in 1947. One journalist opined that Trubnikov's detractors' accusation of "gruffness" (*byvaet grubovat*) exaggerate their claims. "What could be worse for art," demanded the reporter, "than the requirement to portray ideal representatives for every profession . . . instead of incisively uncovering true-to-life

[66] A. Obraztsova, "Tvorcheskii portret: Mikhail Ul'ianov," *Sovetskii ekran* 4 (1965): 3.

[67] K. Khersonskii, "Proverka zhizn'iu: Nash magnitofon v zritel'nom zale doma kul'tury kolkhoza im. Kirova," *Sovetskii ekran* 4 (1965): 4.

characters, realistic circumstances, and human fates!"[68] Despite Trubnikov's dictatorial style, audience members seemed to respond to him quite readily. In fact, his tyrannical tendencies found many supporters among moviegoers. Certain responses clearly demonstrate the viewers' reasons for the chairman's popularity: "If only we had this kind of chairman!" or "Egor is like a mother who sometimes has to apply tough love with her children. Had he not been as strict, he might have not achieved his goal."[69]

Some movie critics fought against canonizing Trubnikov as a quintessential post-Stalinist hero and role model. Their comments made it clear that Trubnikov reminded them too much of Stalinist methods of rule. The kolkhoz chairman symbolized the antithesis of an intellectual, reflective hero. The following exchanges speak volumes about the kinds of arguments Trubnikov's opponents advanced:

> **M. Kuznetsov:**
> One person decides for everyone else. . . . He orders people around, interferes with everything. . . . And everyone around him is meant to simply obey.
> **E. Surikov:**
> No, esteemed critic! Ruthless? Achieves his goal by breaking other people's drives? Yes, but he invests his entire being in this fight. Probably that is why we viewers like him so much.
> **B. Balter:**
> Delirious maniac, a fanatic . . . He can do as he pleases. He grabs people by the throat. Did such men exist? They existed. But even the dictum 'the goal justifies the means' existed.
> **A. P. Vinogradov:**
> I felt confused, and then aggrieved because it appears as if we could not rebuild the countryside after the war had it not been for this kind of a superman.
> **V. Tolstykh:**
> He uncovers the moral greatness of the communist ideal. Exposes it instead of illustrating it!
> **A. P. Vinogradov:**
> If our Western ideological enemies see this movie, they will surely say: "You want communism? Well, here it is![70]

[68] Ibid, 5.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Lev Anninskii, *Shestidesiatniki*, 168. Similar discussions were conducted during after a closed viewing of the film among the members of the Cinematographic Union. RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 525, ll. 1-73.

While some critics saw in him a modern-day Chapaev, other saw him as nothing more than a thug, or, as N. N. Klado called him, "a conductor without an orchestra."

Both movies feature resolute protagonists with similar operational methods. Significantly, while Egor is praised for his single-mindedness, Nadezhda is unable to adapt to the new era. Even supporters of *Wings* condemned Nadezhda's methods, and simply wanted to exculpate her by detailing her past, making her difficult character understandable but not justifiable.[71]

The double standard becomes especially palpable in the way critics treated a similar episode in Nadezhda's and Egor's life. In *The Chairman*, a young female worker asks Trubnikov for permission to leave the kolkhoz in order to pursue her studies. Once confronted with a boorish rejection she demands: "What, I can't choose my own fate?" Without flinching, the chairman categorically responds: "No, because you're still just a driveling brat and because you don't know what you want." Film critic E. Surkov justified Trubnikov's lack of tact handled the situation, by arguing that the chairman had, in fact, perceived the girl's potential and understood just how needed her talent was on the collective farm. Surkov even claimed that the chairman's "tough love" proved his farsightedness; Trubnikov protected her from the bureaucratic nightmare that lay outside the confines of the kolkhoz! In Trubnikov's case good intentions vindicated ungallant behavior. But when Nadezhda applies *her* iron will to discipline a student at her vocational school, the same rules do not apply. Her firm approach is met with no applause. Critics rebuked Nadezhda for her inability to connect with the youth. Even her supporters could not excuse her action using the rationalization that excused Trubnikov's rudeness. Despite the fact that the situations were so

[71] This is most evident in the discussion between moviemakers after their viewing of the film. See RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4. d. 512, ll. 1-65.

close in spirit, Nadezhda's sternness amounted to a lack of love for Soviet youth while Trubnikov's foresight excused his disrespect.

Conclusion

After 1953 the gradual problematization of female protagonists established stereotypically feminine qualities—such as emotiveness, compassion, and introspection—as the guiding values for the post-Stalinist period. Khrushchev, in fact, distinguished the socialist order from the capitalist system by highlighting the maternal care the former showered on its citizen. At the Twenty-second Party Congress, the First Secretary contrasted the capitalist "dog-eats-dog" mentality (*chelovek cheloveku volk*) with the utopian Soviet credo: "A man is a man's friend, comrade, and brother." (*Chelovek cheloveku drug, tovarishch i brat*.) Similarly, at the 1959 Kitchen Debate, Khrushchev told Vice President Richard Nixon: "In Russia, all you have to do to get a house is to be born in the Soviet Union. . . . In America, if you don't have a dollar you have a right to choose between sleeping in a house or on the pavement." The post-Stalinist system thus cast itself as a custodian of national security, welfare, and comfort, envisioning its polity as a compassionate community vested in promoting social harmony. The broad promotion of a more tolerant worldview facilitated an emergence of an empathetic and emotive masculinity, which challenged the bellicose hypermasculinity of the Stalin years.

Anxious about the lack of social conformity and more open displays of noncompliance, party officials fought against films which, in their eyes, undermined the state-sponsored crusade to propagate communist morality within the home. Although movies that investigating the darker sides of Soviet domestic life passed censors in the guise of

cautionary morality tales, directors had to dispel the notion that their productions slandered Soviet reality by showing dysfunctional home life. Reformist moviemakers, however, rarely proffered either clear-cut solutions to moral issues or happy endings for their heroes, opting for a hopeful but ultimately open-ended finale. They defended the ambiguousness of their films by invoking the populist logic, claiming that Soviet audiences could be trusted to determine right from wrong. Combating the tradition of Stalinist heavy-handed didacticism, directors argued that their productions were meant to engage audiences and stimulate conversations rather than to offer ready-made recipes for happiness.

Although emotive masculinity fit well with the country's changing mood, party authorities increasingly doubted the propaganda value of the more sensitive and down-to-earth celluloid heroes. The audiences, while certainly not opposed to real-life celluloid masculinity, simultaneously felt a connection to more macho heroes. Despite the fact that domesticated, "feminized" masculinity did not replace the Stalinist masculine archetype, it nonetheless managed to temper it. Even though neither sex proved beyond reproach in Thaw cinema, films of the period allowed for the possibility of a scenario in which female protagonists guided their male counterparts to consciousness. Thaw-era filmmakers can thus be credited with creating a cultural space in which gender norms were no longer taken for granted and became open to contestation. The focus on a person's quotidian affairs and a dedication to exploring his inner world expanded the filmmakers' and moviegoers' field of vision. The private side of men's lives that had been hidden from public view in Stalin's day could now receive critical examination. This shift allowed the reformist intelligentsia to interrogate the human condition independently of principles underpinning historical

materialism. Consequently, Thaw-era heroes and heroines propagated the idea that human will and agency play an active role in historical progress.

Chapter 4

Engineers and Scientists as Archetypal Celluloid Heroes of the Reformist Intelligentsia

Vladimir Dudintsev's 1956 novel *Not by Bread Alone* figures as one of the central texts of the Thaw as it typifies many of the core values of the *shestidesiatniki* generation. It is no coincidence that this novel focuses on the life of an engineer, who is the first literary protagonist to reference the abuses of the Stalin years and condemn the mentality that bred the period's complicity and violence.[1] The central character, the inventor Lopatkin, had been prosecuted on trumped-up charges and sentenced to a labor camp for eight years. Reflecting on the time he served in the Gulag, Lopatkin comments: "The term 'deprivation of freedom' is incorrect. A man who has learned to think cannot be completely deprived of freedom."[2] Lopatkin's oft-quoted sentiment became the intelligentsia's credo for a post-Stalinist morality that centered on individual freedom and moral consciousness. Men of learning, like Lopatkin, became the messengers of the intelligentsia's clarion call for a new morality.

Filmmakers took up the trend writers initiated, casting members of the scientific-technical intelligentsia[3] into iconic figures that defined Soviet film during the late 1950s and

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[1] Rosalind J. Marsh discusses how post-Stalinist literature actively promoted de-Stalinization by relating Stalin's deleterious effect on scientific research. See R. J. Marsh, *Soviet Fiction Since Stalin: Science, Politics, and Literature* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 31-54.

[2] Quoted in Neil Cornwell ed., *Reference Guide to Russian Literature* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998), 267.

[3] The Soviet intelligentsia can be divided into two main categories: the creative (*tvorcheskaia*) and scientific-technical (*nauchno-tekhnicheskaia*). The former group included those employed in the arts, while the latter consisted of scientists, researchers, and engineers.

1960s.[4] The trope of principled researchers and engineers combating red tape, lies, and inefficiency dovetailed with the resurrection of fictional heroes such as Hamlet and Don Quixote; the incorruptible scientist played the role of the folkloric holy fool, who, as if oblivious to the futility of his task, demands justice and truth at any cost to himself and others. On the one hand, scientists, as figures fixated on their research, bolstered the official rhetoric that an individual's self-fulfillment comes through self-sacrifice to the common cause. On the other hand, as figures dedicated to objective truth rather than ideological imperatives or careerist exigencies, scientists personified the intelligentsia's liberal views on the limits of official power and the inviolability of individual freedoms. Because scientists assumed such an ambivalent position, filmmakers were able to produce complex protagonists who expressed a dual message. A commitment to his calling and willingness to sacrifice the personal for the professional made the empiricist a perfect poster-boy for official propaganda. At the same time, the intelligentsia promoted the new hero because his impartiality and dedication to truth made him an ideal guardian of liberal ideals.

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[4] During the Thaw there was no lack of movies featuring scientist as protagonists or revolving around scientific issues: *Journeys and Destinies* (Puti i sud'by) by Iakov Bazelian (1955), *Honeymoon* (Medovyi mesiats) by Nadezhda Koshverova (1956), *Researchers* (Iskateli) by Mikhail Shapiro (1957), *The Man from Planet Earth* (Chelovek s planety Zemlia) by Boris Buneev (1958), *A Sleepless Night* (Bessonnaia noch') by Isidor Annenskii (1960), *Spring Storms* (Vesennie grozy) by Nikolai Figurovskii (1960), *Kangaroo Court* (Sud sumashedshikh) by Grigorii Roshal' (1961), *Battle Along the Road* (Bitva v puti) by Vladimir Basov (1961), *Nine Days of a Year* (Deviat dnei odnogo goda) by Mikhail Romm (1962), *Academician from Ascania* (Akademik iz Askanii) by Vladimir Gerasimov (1962), *The Barrier of Uncertainty* (Bar'er neizvestnosti) by Nikita Kurikhin (1962), *Flag Station* (Polustanok) by Boris Barnet (1963), *The Conquerors of Heaven* (Im pokoriaetsia nebo) by Tat'iana Lioznova (1963), *Everything Is Left to the People* (Vse ostaetsia liudiam) by Georgii Natanson (1963), *Winter Oak* (Zimnii dub) by M. Kozhin (1963), *A Gunshot in the Fog* (Vystrel v tumane) by Anatolii Bobrovskii and Aleksandr Seryi (1964), *The Easy Life* (Legkaia zhizn') by Veniamin Dorman (1964), *Traces in the Ocean* (Sled v okeane) by Oleg Nikolaevskii (1964), *Into the Storm* (Idu na grozu) by Sergei Mikaelian (1965), *Ballet Star* (Zvezda baleta) by Aleksei Mishurin (1965), *Lebedev Versus Lebedev* (Lebedev protiv Lebedeva) by Genrikh Gabai (1965), *Avdot'ia Pavlovna* by Aleksandr Muratov and Valerii Isakov (1966), *The Ashen Disease* (Seraia bolezn') by Iakov Segel' (1966), *Leaf Fall* (Listopad) by Otar Ioseliani (1966), *Hi, It's Me!* (Zdravstvui, eto ia!) by Frunze Dovlatian (1966), *They Live Next Door* (Oni zhivut riadom) by Grigorii Roshal' (1967), *The Mysterious Wall* (Tainstvennaia stena) by Irina Povolotskaia and Mikhail Sadkovich (1967), *They Called Him Robert* (Ego zvali Robert) by Il'ia Ol'shvanger (1967), *The Merchant of Air* (Prodavets vozdukha) by Vladimir Riabtsev (1967), *Off-Season* (Mertvii sezon) by Sava Kulish (1968).

Because members of the scientific-technical intelligentsia ranked highly in the popular imagination and figured prominently in official discourse, the reformist intelligentsia exploited the popularity of the scientist to promote a subversive kind of masculine model. While the populace and official propaganda idealized the scientific profession and its practitioners, elevating them to cult status, reformist filmmakers utilized physicists, cyberneticists, and mathematicians to challenge uniformity in regard to both science and ideology. Unlike their Stalin-era precursors—explorers, geologists, and aviators—Khrushchev-era scientists questioned the existence of absolute, permanent truths regarding either political dogma or scientific knowledge. In stark contrast to the brawny heroes of the not-so-distant past, the brainy scientist flaunted his irreverence for authority and stood out because of his intellectual aptitude. The Stalinist hypermasculine archetypes, with their sculpted bodies and their trust in the party, lost their cultural capital to men whose unquestioned loyalty was reserved for the laws of science. The conflict in many of the period's movies about scientists revolved around a young and brash specialist (rightfully) challenging the out-of-date practices advocated by a senior, but less competent (and usually corrupt) administrator. This conflict was as much about scientific principles as it was about hierarchy, authority, and power. Thaw-era films about scientists almost wholly dispensed with the Stalinist socialist realist tradition of building the narrative around a senior party functionary who transforms his young protégé into a politically conscious figure. After all, even in film it would be difficult, if not ludicrous, to convincingly portray ideological watchdogs tutoring the nation's most erudite men.

Despite the fact that writers and filmmakers often placed scientific integrity above ideological imperatives and scientists above party functionaries, the authorities allowed

controversial representations of the scientific-technical intelligentsia since this community stood at the frontline of the state's war on religion. An ardent opponent to religion throughout his political career, Khrushchev orchestrated a state-sponsored anti-religious campaign that lasted from 1958 to his ouster in 1964. He mobilized the party and governmental apparatus, labor unions, publishing houses, and educational institutions to eradicate all traces of religious life in the country. Khrushchev framed the anti-religious campaign as part and parcel of de-Stalinization, accusing the Great Leader of having violated the "Leninist line on religion." The journal *Science and Religion* (*Nauka i religiia*), which appeared in 1959 as the mouthpiece of the government's anti-religious campaign, blasted Stalin for curtailing (and eventually disbanding) the mass atheistic organization, the League of the Militant Godless, accusing him of "contradicting the principles of the Leninist decree on the separation of church and state."[5] Since the authorities aimed to replace religious superstitions with scientific laws, scientists became the ideological vanguard, affirming the correctness of materialist views on the development of nature and society.[6]

Genuine enthusiasm for, and popular belief in, the endless possibilities of science added another dimension to the cultural status of scientists and engineers. The 1957 launching of Sputnik and Iurii Gagarin's flight into space in 1961 figured prominently in the national (and global) imagination, proving that there could no longer be any questions about the scientific community's ability to solve all problems facing humankind. The cosmonaut—

[5] Quoted in Bohdan R. Bociurkiw "De-Stalinization and Religion in the U.S.S.R.," *International Journal* 20, no. 3 (1965): 312.

[6] As early as 1954 the Central Committee issued a resolution reminding its cadres that "at the basis of scientific-atheist propaganda must be placed a popular explanation of the most important phenomena in the life of nature and society, such questions as the formation of the universe, the origins of life and of man on earth, achievements in the areas of astronomy, biology, physiology, physics, chemistry and other sciences, which affirm the correctness of materialist views on the development of nature and society." Quoted in Joan Delaney Grossman, "Khrushchev's Anti-Religious Policy and the Campaign of 1954," *Soviet Studies* 24, no. 3 (1973): 377-78.

the embodiment of the Soviet space program in particular and Soviet science in general—became the incarnation of the New Soviet Man. The typical propaganda cliché reflected this view: "the Soviet cosmonaut is not merely a conqueror of outer space, not merely a hero of science and technology, but first and foremost he is a real, living, flesh-and-blood new man, who demonstrates in action all the invaluable qualities of the Soviet character, which Lenin's party has been cultivating for decades."[7]

More than a publicity stunt, cosmonauts assumed a leading position in popular consciousness as the era's superheroes. Historian Richard Stites described the space-heroes—or, more specifically, the mass-produced images of them—as "new social cement."[8] Ordinary people became genuinely fascinated with Soviet triumphs in space. "Gagarin's achievement was our greatest pride," recalled one member of the "Sputnik generation."[9] According to a 1963 survey conducted by a popular youth-oriented Soviet newspaper, Gagarin's flight constituted the twentieth century's greatest achievement and Sputnik represented humanity's greatest technological feat.[10] The first manned space flight commanded such broad public admiration that Soviet propagandists regularly exploited its popularity to bolster the atheist drive; for instance, *Science and Religion* reported the remarks of a once God-fearing man: "Now I am convinced that god is science, is man! Iurii Gagarin

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[7] Quoted in Slava Gerovitch, "'New Soviet Man' Inside Machine: Human Engineering, Spacecraft Design, and the Construction of Communism," *Osiris* 22, no. 1 (2007): 136.

[8] Richard Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 145.

[9] Donald J. Raleigh, trans. and ed., *Russia's Sputnik Generation: Soviet Baby Boomers Talk about Their Lives* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 167.

[10] Boris A. Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniia*, vol. 1, *Zhizn' 1-ia: Epokha Khrushcheva* (Moscow, 2001), 403.

overcame all the faith in heavenly power that I had in my soul."[11] Soviet science had thus symbolically cleansed the outer space of God, saints, and angels and filled it with new tenants: space ships, satellites, and lunar probes. In both the popular imagination and official discourse scientists governed the heavens above and the earth below; they were the new masters of universe.

Despite their preoccupation with abstract and complex ideas, scientists also epitomized the notion of "cool." Partially, this "cool" came because of their irreverence for authority. By the late 1960s, the appearance and behavior of these unlikely celebrities evolved into an impossible hybrid. One commentator complained about the preposterous stereotype accompanying depictions of physicists in mass media: "he plays the guitar, dances the twist, drinks vodka, keeps a lover, agonizes over abstract problems, sacrifices his free time for the sake of his scientific calling, and trades punches with the antiheroic physicist."[12] There was no better time to be a physicist; their Warholian fifteen minutes of fame had arrived.

This chapter analyzes four films that tapped into both official and popular fascination with the scientific-technical intelligentsia and showcased researchers engaged in highly specialized fields as protagonists: M. I. Romm's 1962 *Nine Days of a Year* (Deviat dnei odnogo goda), S. G. Mikaelian's 1965 *Into the Storm* (Idu na grozu), G. E. Iungval'd-Khil'kevich's 1966 *Rainbow Formula* (Formula radugi), and I. S. Ol'shvanger's 1967 *His Name Was Robert* (Ego zvali Robert). These films experienced very different fates: *Nine Days* attracted approximately twenty-five million viewers domestically and garnered

[11] Quoted in David Powell, "The Effectiveness of Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (1967): 371-72.

[12] See Vladimir Vladin, "O tom kak pisat' ob uchennykh voobshche i o molodykh fizikakh v chastnosti," in *Fiziki prodolzhaiut shutit'*, ed. V. F. Turchin (Moscow: Mir, 1968), 308.

multiple festival awards abroad[13]; *Storm* sold approximately forty million tickets[14]; *Robert* received a very limited distribution; and *Rainbow* never had its premiere because it was censored. Despite the varying fortunes of these four productions, they all received largely negative attention from the authorities. Ideological watchdogs paid close attention to these motion pictures because they problematized the positivist view of science and cast doubt on the idea that man can govern his natural environment.[15] The heroes of these films distinguished themselves in that they used objective reasoning to undermine sacred ideological truths while simultaneously challenging the state-sponsored cult of science. In other words, these films explored two moral questions central to post-Stalinist life: how to preserve one's independence within a politicized/bureaucratized system and how to safeguard one's humanity in an increasingly automated/mechanized world. The directors of these films drew ire from party officials because the underlying message implied that blind subservience to either the state apparatus or the cult of science led to a loss of moral and intellectual integrity. These four films thus distinguished themselves from the many science-themed films of the era by representing both true scientists and a valid pursuit of science as fundamentally and unambiguously separate from party dictates and ideological pressures.

[13] Romm's film won the main award at the Czechoslovak Karlovy Vary film festival in 1962, received honorary diplomas at festivals in San Francisco (1962) and Melbourne (1965), and earned a Polish Critics' Award for "Best Foreign Film" category in 1962.

[14] *Storm* was a two-part film and each part attracted twenty million viewers.

[15] *Nine Days* escaped the censors' kiss of death because of M. Romm's influence in the industry while *Storm* avoided being placed on the censorship shelf because an already acclaimed novel served as the basis of the script. *Rainbow* and *Robert*, however, were the work of inexperienced directors who based their films on original scripts and were therefore much more vulnerable to party meddling.

The Cult of Science and Its Practitioners in Literature and Film before Khrushchev

Even before the Bolsheviks took power, they proclaimed science to be a panacea for Russia's problems. The Communist Party staked its legitimacy on technological progress as it aimed to revitalize the nation's infrastructure, reduce socioeconomic inequities, and restore the country's international standing. Science replaced God, becoming the centerpiece of the official Soviet faith. Bolsheviks were convinced that scientific discoveries and reasoning would (eventually) liberate the masses from religious superstition and engender political consciousness. Communism and technological progress thus became two sides of the same coin; one was unimaginable without the other. Marxism justified this positivist perspective because Marx maintained that machines determine the course of history. That is, Marx argued that technology not only alters the political course of history (technology of warfare) or social attitudes (invention of radio/television) but also produces new socioeconomic orders.[16] As historian Ethan Pollock concisely put it: "If Marxism-Leninism was scientific, and science would flourish if it was based on Marxist principles, it followed that science and Soviet Marxism should mutually reinforce each other."[17]

Since the ruling establishment staked its legitimacy and authority on advancing science as a cure-all for the country's technological backwardness, those who represented science and technological progress in mass culture prefigured as the champions of the Soviet system. From Lenin to Brezhnev, Soviet leaders fused centralization and bureaucratization with a faith in the power of technology to solve socioeconomic problems and create a new type of individual. Lenin, for instance, idealized the power of electricity and popularized the

[16]As Marx famously proclaimed: "The hand-mill produces a society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist." See Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 56.

[17] Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 3.

idea that mass electrification would fundamentally alter the social structure of the nascent socialist order. He believed that electricity and mechanization of the economy would modernize agriculture, remake peasants into full members of the socialist state, and turn the unskilled, largely illiterate, and rapidly growing urban proletariat into a class-conscious force.[18] Lenin's famous slogan "Communism equals Soviet power plus electrification of the whole country" aptly expressed the deep-seated connection between Bolshevik ideology and science. Lenin's utopian view of the possibilities of science characterized much of Stalin's "hero projects" as well. Breakneck industrialization, the construction of gargantuan canals and hydroelectric power stations, and overzealous collectivization illustrated the idealistic view that both society and nature could be transformed by communist cadres and their technological know-how.

Considering the centrality of science to Soviet power, the manner in which the representatives of science were depicted—their appearance, internal make-up, and biography—provide valuable clues about official attitudes toward the role and nature of scientific research within a socialist context. To understand the importance of the appearance of the scientist *intelligent* as the prototypical Soviet hero, it is necessary to trace the evolution of how and why official propaganda shied away from using the scientist as the embodiment of socialist masculinity and science. It is significant that scientists, as the most obvious candidates for representing the possibilities of technology, did not assume this role until the Thaw period. Up until 1953, films, novels, and the press portrayed researchers alternatively as Stalin's dutiful pupils or as negative characters who, because of either megalomania and/or undeveloped class-consciousness, aimed to sabotage the workers' state.

[18] Paul R. Josephson, "'Projects of the Century' in Soviet History: Large-Scale Technologies from Lenin to Gorbachev," *Technology and Culture* 36, no. 3 (1995): 523-24.

When the Soviet media praised its scientists, it focused on the broader competition of socialist versus capitalist science rather than the exceptionality of specific scientists. Scientific "genius" under Stalin applied to those researchers who best applied Stalinist teachings to their investigative methods rather than to those who approached scientific problems originally. Because science took a back seat to ideological dogma, propaganda appreciated scientists as followers of the party line rather than as innovators. Even when the big screen featured the life of a famous Soviet scientist, the film stressed the day's ideological priorities while purposefully downplaying scientific practice and theory. Consequently, until Stalin's death, scientists played second fiddle to men who approached science as a physical, rather than mental, activity. Thus aviators and geologists, rather than laboratory-ridden researchers, came to embody the possibilities of Stalinist science.

The negative and ambivalent characterization of scientists defined the entirety of Lenin's rule and the New Economic Policy (NEP) even though the state heavily propagated the appreciation of science among the populace.[19] Because the majority of scientists at the time were "bourgeois experts," that is, remnants of the ancien régime, they could hardly be considered appropriate embodiment of the Soviet future.[20] Thus while "the Bolsheviks were eager to combat religion with science" and while "*Pravda* ran a bimonthly column entitled 'Science and Technology' during much of the 1920s in which prominent scientists described

[19] R. S. Kats argues that Lenin was the father of Soviet science fiction because the Soviet leader wanted the literate populace to be able to imagine a brave new world rather than focusing on their daily discontents. A group of sci-fi authors, unified in an unofficial organization "Red Selenite," ensured a dynamic publication record of science fiction works until 1928. See R. S. Kats, *Istoriia sovetskoi fantastiki* (St. Petersburg: Izd. S.-Peterburgskogo Universiteta, 2004), 7-38.

[20] Pollock notes: "Lenin defended 'bourgeois technical experts' and the contribution they could make to modernizing the state. The regime denounced bourgeois literature, arts, social policies, and the like, but it supported bourgeois scientists." See Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, 4.

their research," scientists did not become cultural icons.[21] For instance, Il'ia Erenburg's 1924 novel *Grabber* (Rvach) features Professor Petriakov, who is a specialist in then-popular radio/wireless communications. But this bourgeois scientist is far from a hero, using his talent to benefit himself economically rather than contributing to the greater good.[22] The famous science fiction author Aleksandr Beliaev (1884-1942) portrayed foreign scientists with nefarious plans without contrasting them to their positive Soviet counterparts. In his renowned 1925 book, *Professor Dowell's Head* (Golova Profesora Douelia), for instance, Beliaev tells the story of a mad French scientist, Professor Kern, who discovers a way to revive the heads of the deceased to further his own seedy purposes.[23] In a similar vein, the decade's works of science fiction often featured a whodunit structure,[24] casting members of the scientific-technical intelligentsia as negative, mad-scientist types bent on dominating the world. The most famous representative of this genre is Aleksei Nikolaevich Tolstoi, whose 1926 novel *Engineer Garin's Hyperboloid* (Giperboloid inzhenera Garina) proved immensely popular throughout the Soviet period. The latter is a story of a power-hungry engineer who, with the help of a concentrated heat ray, uncovers a vast deposit of gold in the earth's core. Threatening the world with ecological disaster, he becomes dictator but is eventually foiled by a good Chekist.[25] In all these cases scientists are unscrupulous characters, deserving of

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[21] Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin!: Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 29.

[22] He is ultimately unsuccessful in avoiding the pitfalls of the NEP politics. Having involved himself with currency speculators, the professor ends up in jail where he commits suicide. See Konstantin Frumkin, "Ot klishe k tragedii: Mif o 'geroicheskom entuziazme' uchenykh v zerkale literatury," *Neva* 3 (2007): 226-27.

[23] Genadii Prashkevich, *Krasnyi sfinks: Istoriia russkoi fantastiki ot V.F. Odoevskogo do Borisa Shterna* (Svin'in i synov'ia: Novosibirsk, 2007), 197-209.

[24] These were also known as "red detective novels" or *krasnye detektivy*.

[25] Vsevolod Revich, *Perekrestok utopii: Sud'by fantastiki na fone sudeb strany* (Moscow: IV RAN, 1998), 63-68.

close supervision as their genius feeds their sense of (class) superiority and dooms them to destructive megalomania.

Even science fiction novels of the 1920s, such as Aleksandr Bogdanov's *Engineer Menni* and *Red Star*, are more interested in describing the other-worldly socio-political orders than the technology of these future worlds[26]; the stress is placed on the fiction rather than on the science.[27] As a result, the technologically-advanced utopias seem to have emerged *ex nihilo*. A. N. Tolstoi's novel *Aelita* (made into a film by the same name in 1924), for instance, depicts Mars as a technologically advanced but unjust society in which a corrupt ruling class subjugates and exploits the toiling masses. A new bold world and a successful revolution against the degenerate Old World is heralded with the arrival of two Soviet characters—engineer Los' and a demobilized Red Army soldier Gusev.[28]

Although science continued to reign supreme throughout the 1920s, it was clear that the Bolsheviks would not allow scientists to symbolize the ideals of the October Revolution or the socialist order. Instead, the authorities extolled the rough-and-tough characters like Gleb Chumalov in Fedor Gladkov's *Cement* and Korotkov in N. N. Liashko's *The Blast Furnace*. Both novels made their debut in 1925 and their protagonists soon became the standard socialist realist heroes. Gladkov's and Liashko's magnum opuses both feature Civil War veterans who have to fight the odds to reopen the local cement factory/blast furnace. It

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[26] Patrick L. McGuire, *Red Stars: Political Aspects of Soviet Science Fiction* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 6-22.

[27] Peter Yershov, *Science Fiction and Utopian Fantasy in Soviet Literature* (New York: Research Program on the U.S.S. R., 1954), 17-35.

[28] A. A. Bogdanov's 1908 novel *Red Star* also describes Martian society and accentuates paradoxes embedded in it. On the one hand, Martians have moved beyond the dichotomous gender roles, have established an equitable class system, and have invented a way to renew organisms through blood transfusion. On the other hand, Martians are planning a colonization of Earth because natural resources are becoming scarce on their planet. Martians believe that earthlings will need to be ruled with an iron fist since many centuries will pass until they will be capable of the "high socialism" evident on Mars.

is these uneducated soldiers, rather than the engineers and scientists in charge of the enterprises, who struggle against popular indifference and bureaucratic red tape to assist the state and improve the living standard of their hometowns. At the conclusion of *The Blast Furnace*, Korotkov defines the true Soviet heroes: "Yes, we were the ones who took the ore from under the earth; we smelted it, forged it; and it was with our own iron that they tore our nostrils, branded our foreheads and cheeks, tortured, cut us, put us in fetters and handcuffs."[29] Thus the local and national technological advancement depended on the brawn of the uneducated but politically conscious proletariat rather than the brains of the technological intelligentsia.

Although the Stalinist state celebrated academicians, such as agronomist T. D. Lysenko and biologist V. R. Williams, it deemphasized their individual "genius" and used them to showcase the socialist approach to science. These scientists stood in for Stalin's specious theories on everything from language to genetics; scientists did not innovate but rather followed and applied Stalin's "scientific hypotheses." The biographies of the nation's celebrated scientists therefore failed to illustrate scientific principles or spark curiosity about science. Instead, their lives educated movie audiences that the highest calling is service to the state and Stalin's "discoveries". For instance, the 1936 cinematic biography of the botanist K. A. Timiriazev in *The Baltic Deputy* (Deputat Baltiki) begins at the time of the hero's seventieth birthday in 1917. The focus, however, is not on the protagonist's scientific achievements, but on his stalwart support of the Bolshevik order.[30] Timiriazev's life was

[29] Quoted in Rolf Hellebust, *Flesh to Metal: Soviet Literature and the Alchemy of the Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 84.

[30] Other films that featured engineers and scientist as dutiful members of the Soviet collective: *Doctor Kaliuzhnyi* (Doktor Kaliuzhnyi) by Erast Garin (1939), *Engineer Geidar* (Inzhener Geidar) by Mikail Mikailov (1935), *Simple Folk* (Prostye liudi) by Grigorii Kozintsev (1945), and *A Great Force* (Velikaia sila) by Fridrikh Ermler (1949).

worth turning into a film not because of his professional, but political, activities. This trend became even more dominant in the aftermath of World War II. During the Zhdanovshchina (1946-52), state-sponsored xenophobia, nationalist chauvinism, and ideological witch-hunts forced filmmakers to depict Soviet inventors as having conceived of everything from the incandescent bulb to the steam engine. Five biopics made between 1947 and 1949[31] epitomized the day's xenophobic and rabidly nationalist point of view while scientific research and discovery played a perfunctory role.

In addition to playing Stalin's loyal protégés, engineers and scientists often filled the role of villains; they doubled as enemies of the people or inadvertent accomplices to foreign spies.[32] The main function of these productions was to create a public distrust of and aversion for any Western ideas rather than promote an appreciation for science or its practitioners.[33] A. M. Room rooted the storyline of two of his films—*The Court of Honor* (Sud Chesti) in 1948 and *Silver Dust* (Serebristaia pyl') in 1953—in the scientific realm and accentuated the necessity of protecting Soviet discoveries against immoral Western scientists. *The Court of Honor*, based on an A. Shtein's 1948 award-winning play *The Law of Honor* (Zakon chesti), tells a story of two Soviet scientists who, out of both vanity and naivete, surrender their institute's hard-won research results to American spies who pose as legitimate scientists.[34]

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[31] *Pirogov* by Grigorii Kozintsev, *Miklukho-Maklai* by Aleksandr Razumnyi, *Academician Ivan Pavlov* by Grigorii Roshal', *Alexander Popov* by Gerbert Rappaport, and *Michurin* by Aleksandr Dovzhenko

[32] The five most relevant instances of this trend are: *Defiant* (Vstrechnyi) by Fridrikh Ermler and Sergei Iutkevich (1932), *A Special Case* (Chastnyi sluchai) by Il'ia Trauberg (1933), *The Dark Gorge* (Chernaia past') by Aleksandr Razumnyi (1935), *Party Card* (Partiinyi billet) by Ivan Pyr'ev (1936), and *Engineer Kochin's Mistake* (Oshibka inzhenera Kochina) by Aleksandr Macheret (1939).

[33] A. V. Fateev, *Obraz vraga v Sovetskoĭ propagande, 1945-1954 gg*. (Moscow: RAN, 1999), 77-85.

[34] Nikolai Krementsov's book makes it clear that both the play and the film took their inspiration from true events surrounding two Soviet scientists, N. G. Kliueva and G. I. Roskin. In 1945, this pair appeared to have made substantial progress in the search for a cure for cancer but it became clear that no such remedy was within reach. To deal with this case, Stalin ordered the institutionalization of "honor courts," which operated internally

The dastardly secret agents convince the unsuspecting doctors Losev and Dobrotvorskii that "science knows no borders" and that their discoveries on the reduction of cancerous tumors belong to all of humanity. The protests of their co-workers amount to naught as these heads of the institute indulge their pride, thinking about the international recognition awaiting them. But instead of standing ovations of the world community, they are faced with their compatriot's court of honor for betraying national interests. In *Silver Dust*, Room painted an even more hysterical portrait of Western scientists and the danger they posed to world peace. The 1953 production is a fantastical yarn about a "typical" American scientist who discovers a new weapon of mass destruction, but dies of his own invention before getting a chance to use it for his own immoral agenda.

Thus, by the end of the Stalinist period, scientists lacked the ideological attributes that would make them archetypal heroes. On the one hand, films often depicted the empirical scientists as distinguished but indistinguishable figures in lab coats, whose strict observation of Marxist/Stalinist principles led them to their "breakthroughs." On the other hand, directors marked scientists as figures so consumed with their research that they lacked a developed sense of national pride, making them a prime target for foreign spies. Because scientists played an ambiguous role in Stalinist culture they, unlike aviators and explorers, remained on the sidelines of the popular imagination.

Even as science garnered increasingly more official press coverage during and after the First Five-Year Plan (1928-32)[35] filmmakers cast pilots and explorers as embodiments of

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to punish unpatriotic activities and ensure loyalty for the Soviet system. See Nikolai Krementsov, *The Cure: A Story of Cancer and Politics from the Annals of the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Vladimir Dmitrievich Esakov and Elena Solomonovna Levina, *Delo KR: Sudy chesti v ideologii i praktike poslevoennogo stalinizma* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2001).

[35] Jeffrey Brooks notes: "Whereas *Pravda* devoted only seventeen lead editorials to science and technology from 1921 and 1927, it allotted fifty-four from 1928 through 1932, and eighty-four from 1933

ideal Soviet masculinity and science in action. These men did what the real empirical scientist, the grandfather-next-door types, only theorized about: they conquered both time and space in the name of Soviet supremacy. While scientists were postulating, explorer aviators were accomplishing the impossible and setting world records. Pilots in particular occupied a special place in the pantheon of Soviet heroes. Stalin himself built his public persona through his association with warriors of the heavens and established his father-of-the-people image by treating the aviators as his favorite "sons."[36] In fact, two pilots, Otto Shmidt and Valerii Chkalov, have the (dubious) honor of being the only two individuals ever shown embracing Stalin on the front page of *Pravda*.[37] From 1932 to the beginning of 1939, pilots who broke records for nonstop long-distance flying, who were the first to fly transpolar routes from Eurasia to North America, and who established the world's first scientific outpost at the North Pole figured as the true representatives of Soviet science. Aviation showcased socialist modernity; it displayed the country's technological advancement, economic development, and military might.

Pilots became national heroes not only because of their ability to command their machines: it was their character—or at least the character that was presented to the public—that captured the nation's imagination. More than a passing fad, the modern-day aerial knights-errant "produced hundreds of books and articles, appeared in numerous films and

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through 1939. The newspaper's size remained roughly six pages, but space given to science and technology tripled from three pages a month from 1921 through 1927 to nine from 1928 through 1939." See Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin,* 100.

[36] See Jay Bergman, "Valerii Chkalov: Soviet Pilot as New Soviet Man," *Journal of Contemporary History* 33, no.1 (1998): 135-52 and Katerina Clark, "The Stalinist Myth of the Great Soviet Family," in *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press), 114-135.

[37] John McCannon, "Positive Heroes at the Pole: Celebrity Status, Socialist-Realist Ideal and the Soviet Myth of the Arctic, 1932-39," *Russian Review* 56, no. 3 (1997): 353.

radio broadcasts, and inspired a multitude of poems, songs, and other works."[38] Even when the fascination with the Arctic passed, pilots figured prominently in narratives about the Second World War. In the case of aviators, it held true that their biographies were art imitating life imitating art; their exploits conveyed the spirit of adventure, self-confidence, and invention. As virile, dynamic, and accessible role models, the Stalinist propaganda used them to provide the populace with an ideal to emulate.[39] Judging by the letters these men received, the level of interests in their books, and the popularity of films that featured pilot heroes, aviators were genuinely popular icons. A *London Times* reporter fittingly expressed the general public's adulation of men like Chkalov or Shmidt after visiting the Soviet Arctic: "A Russian schoolboy will dream of his country's polar explorers as a French child dreams of Napoleon or an Australian boy of Bradman."[40]

A 1940 movie *A Hero's Brother* (Brat Geroia) further underscored the pilots' centrality to the lives of the general populace.[41] The central character is a fifth-grader in an orphanage in Russia's far north who dreams of a big brother who could inspire and advise him. Since the little boy Gesha shares the same last name as a famous pilot, he lies that he is the celebrated hero's brother. Gesha, however, has to admit his fabrication when his fictitious

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[38] Ibid., 348

[39] In the decade between 1935 and 1945 pilots were a staple in Soviet feature productions, and were often the year's blockbusters. Some films featuring aviators as central figures include: *Pilots* (Letchiki) by Iulii Raizman (1935), *On Break* (Na otdykhe) by Eduard Ioganson (1936), *Destroyers* (Istrebiteli) by Eduard Pentslin (1939), *A Hero's Brother* (Brat Geroia) by Iurii Vasil'chikov (1940), *The Everyday* (Budni) by Boris Shreiber (1940), *The Fifth Ocean* (Piatyi okean) by Isidor Annenskii (1940), *Valerii Chkalov* by Mikhail Kalatozov (1941), *Steel Angel* (Zheleznyi angel) by Vladimir Iurenev (1942), *Air Cab* (Vozdushnyi izvozchik) by Gerbert Rappaport (1943), *Moscow Skies* (Nebo Moskvy) by Iulii Raizman (1944), *Heavenly Slug* (Nebesnyi tikhokhod) by Semen Timoshenko (1945), and *A Story About a Real Man* (Povest' o nastoiashchem cheloveke) by Aleksandr Stolper (1948).

[40] Quoted in McCannon, "Positive Heroes at the Pole," 360.

[41] The movie was based on popular children's short story *Cheremysh, A Hero's Brother* by L.A. Kassil'.

sibling visits the small town by chance. Thus the "big brother" is an inspiration to the boy prior to their encounter and then acts as a cathartic figure, helping his protégé understand a pilot's most important quality is integrity and service to the homeland rather than technical expertise. Much in the way Stalin acted as a father-figure to the nation, pilots embodied optimal role-models for Soviet youth, occupying that mythical place between reality and fantasy.

Emma Widdis's research makes clear that, in addition to pilots, explorers in general and geologists in particular played a crucial role for the Stalinist regime. Geologists symbolized the Stalinist preoccupation with conquering the vast Soviet expanse and taming nature. The image of the geologist was key in articulating "a relationship of exploitation" Stalinist culture had in relation to Soviet territory.[42] In the process of conveying an idea of Soviet space waiting to be subjugated to human will and design, geologists emerged as epitomes of Soviet masculinity. Vladimir Schneider's 1935 film *Golden Lake* (Zolotoe Ozero), for example, featured a group of indomitable geologists searching for gold in the Altai region while battling unscrupulous bands of gold diggers. The same year *Lenfil'm* released *Moonstone* (Lunnyi kamen'), which told of a geological expedition in search of the precious stone. Set in 1912, *Moonstone* is a romantic tale of courageous geologists braving the elements, bandits, and their own fears. The most famous example of this genre is Sergei Gerasimov's 1936 adventure tale about *The Brave Seven* (Semero Smelykh).[43] A geologist, Il'ia Letnikov, publishes an open letter in search of Komsomol volunteers to assist him in

[42] Emma Widdis, *Visions of a New Land: Soviet Film from the Revolution to the Second World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 4-13.

[43] The film was inspired by actual events. In 1932 a Komsomol member Kostia Zvantsev issued a call to his comrades in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* to join him in establishing a research station in the Arctic. In 1934 he became the first expedition leader in the Arctic to set up a research station manned by a contingent of youth explorers on Taimyr Peninsula. Zvantsev went on to become a well-known polar explorer (*poliarnik*) and penned an account of his experiences titled *Winter Station* (Zimovka).

establishing a polar station on an Arctic island.[44] In contrast to many films of the mid-1930s that fixate on figures of empirical scientists as wreckers, spies, and saboteurs, Gerasimov's tale focuses on the limitless potential of the selfless youth who use scientific principles to extend Soviet civilization to its most remote and inhospitable corners.

Throughout Stalin's reign films represented science as an *activity* that happened outdoors; it was seldom represented as a purely intellectual occupation unassociated with the state's agenda. Science was, above all, a practical affair meant to bolster the state's Five-Year-Plan targets. Correlated as it was with production quotas, science expressed the state's focus on the limitless potential of the human body. The politics of de-Stalinization, however, profoundly changed the trends established during the Leninist and Stalinist eras. Not only did Thaw-era films present science as an almost exclusive purview of highly skilled specialists, but it also divorced films about science and scientists from the theme of production.

This is not to say that the theme of production vanished from public discourse during the Thaw, especially since Khrushchev propagated the kinds of gargantuan projects that defined his predecessor's reign. Many of Khrushchev's schemes—the Virgin Lands Campaign, the amalgamation of collective farms into agro-cities, and the cultivation of corn—smacked of the Stalinist approach to modernizing the national economy. Khrushchev retained the megalomaniac aspects of Stalinist projects and expanded the scope of science's reach as "the conquest of nature now extended to the micro-world and the heavens."[45] The 1961 New Party Program further accentuated the state's push to modernize the national economy and infrastructure, arguing that the strategic use of science and technology would

[44] Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*, 147-53.

[45] Josephson, "'Projects of the Century' in Soviet History," 538.

allow the Soviet Union to overtake the United States per capita production by 1970, achieve communism by 1980, and construct a new type of society/individual in the process. Despite the continued stress on productivity indicators, the liberalization that occurred in the arts and politics during the de-Stalinization drive also affected the sciences. By denouncing Stalin's spurious scientific tenets, Khrushchev helped elevate Soviet science to international standards. By freeing science from undue ideological constraints, Khrushchev afforded the reformist intelligentsia an opportunity to base the conflict of science-themed films around morality rather than productivity issues.

After 1956, morality and conscience reentered official rhetoric and became tied to scientific issues. Khrushchev's Secret Speech objected to Stalin's rule on the basis of ethical principles. Nikita Sergeevich denounced the deportation of entire peoples, the imprisonment of "many honest Communists," and the widespread terror bred by Stalin's paranoia by saying "there were no serious reasons for the use of extraordinary mass terror."[46] Having denounced mass repressions, the new Party Secretary began to appeal to people's conscience to secure their loyalty. What is more, by the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961, the Communist Party proclaimed itself to be "the mind, honor, and conscience of our age, of the Soviet people, as it performs great revolutionary transformations."[47] At the same party congress the authorities issued a new party program and the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" was its centerpiece. Even a cursory glance of its twelve points—conscientious labor for the good of society, a high sense of public duty, fraternal solidarity with the working people of all countries—reveals that post-Stalinist officialdom "interpreted morality in functional

[46] N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers* (London: Sphere Books, 1971), 521.

[47] Cited in Z. Berebeshkina, *Problema sovesti v Marksistsko-Leninskoi etike* (Moscow: Izd. VPShi AON pri TSK KPSS, 1963), 88.

terms, as something reinforcing the power of the state."[48] As the state scaled back on coercing obedience, official propaganda insisted that obedience to the state is a matter of conscience. At the same time, by highlighting morality and conscience as two primary traits of the New Soviet Man, the authorities put into motion a process of public contestation about what these terms meant in the post-Stalinist context.

Scientists, as modern-day visionaries acted not only as guarantors of a utopia to come but also represented the indispensability of independent, as well as moral, thought and action. These men contemplated abstract problems simply because the problem fascinated them, despite the fact that solving it would not affect the industry's day-to-day operations. After open debate about modern science in general and nuclear physics in particular became more public following Stalin's death, filmmakers utilized scientists as a group that had to wrestle daily with the possible negative uses of their discoveries. Perhaps more important for this study is the fact that the films discussed here stressed the idea that critical and uncensored thought combined with moral responsibility are key to a truly modern masculinity and truly modern science—an ideal that defined the celluloid scientists of the Thaw era. In these kinds of movies, the moral duty of the scientist to the people was paramount, yet the guiding principle was not the party mandates, but a commitment to the objectivity of the scientific process.

Fiziki i liriki

Although Thaw-era filmmakers on the whole extolled science and objective reasoning as a necessary corrective to Stalinist excesses and pseudo-science, some directors nonetheless

[48] Philip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in Soviet Russia* (New London: Routledge, 2005), 64.

intimated that a blind faith in science would produce the same kinds of moral degradation. The four movies examined here—*Nine Days of a Year*, *Into the Storm*, *His Name Was Robert*, and *Rainbow Formula*—appreciated the need for technical modernization but implied that without an ethical compass, man's technological evolution signified a pyrrhic victory. As such, these motion pictures should therefore be seen as part of a larger conversation on technology's complex effect on human personality and human relationships. For instance, in Viktor Rozov's 1962 film script *A, B, C, D, E* the protagonist expresses doubt about technology's ability to engender true contentment: "People invented the color television and the tape recorder . . . they are close to discovering the secret of protein and fly to the moon, but this does not make them any more honest or happy."

Similarly, one of the protagonists in D. A. Granin's popular 1961 novel *Into the Storm*—a top research scientist—asserts that qualities such as integrity and sincerity trump technological prowess. The respected physicist poses a hypothetical question to his star student: "What, in your opinion, distinguishes people from animals? Atomic energy? The telephone? I would say: morality, imagination, ideals. Men's souls won't be improved because you and I are studying the earth's electrical field."[49] Perhaps the most famous poem presaging the potential depersonalization of human personality through modern technology is A. A. Voznesenskii's lengthy 1964 poem *Oza*, which is set in the country's premier nuclear research facility. *Oza* summed up the feelings of those who felt skeptical about the idealistic promises underpinning Promethean science: "All progress is reactionary if it breaks man down" (*Vse progressy reaktsionny, esli rushitsia chelovek*).[50] Noted Soviet philosopher E. V.

[49] Qouted in Marsh, *Soviet Fiction since Stalin*, 216-18.

[50] For more on Voznesenskii's poem "Oza," see Rosalind J. Marsh "Soviet Fiction and the Nuclear Debate," *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 2 (1986): 256.

Il'enkov engaged the skepticism these artists expressed in his 1968 monograph and warned Soviet philosophers and psychologists to resist cybernetic models of the mind that portrayed individuals as no more than that sophisticated self-regulating machines.[51] If Stalinist science based itself on intervention and action, post-Stalinist intellectuals argued for more observation and contemplation in order to fully appreciate technology's effects on humankind.

This ambivalent attitude toward science went beyond the circles of the intelligentsia and acquired a public dimension during the so-called physicists and poets debate (*fiziki i liriki*). The debate began in 1959, when the editors of *Komsomol'skaia pravda* published an editorial by the famed Soviet writer Il'ia Ehrenburg. Ehrenburg commented that neglect of a person's emotional life and an exclusive preoccupation with science "lead society to decay or catastrophe."[52] His passionate defense of emotions and the arts was prompted by a letter from "Nina V.," a Leningrad student. Nina wrote to the famous author seeking relationship and life advice. She had recently broken off an engagement with "Iurii," a successful engineer who cared about little else except for his work. He hardly visited his elderly mother, made friends only with those who could help him achieve his professional goals, and thought that any interest in art, literature, or history was a waste of time in the atomic age. Ehrenburg's editorial on the much needed respect for human emotion and creative achievements resonated with the editors and readers of *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, evoking a strong response from the readership. Engineer I. Poletaev, for example, represented those

[51] Vesa Oittinen, "Introduction," in "The Philosophy of Evald Il'enkov," ed. Vesa Oittinen, special issue, *Studies in East European Thought* 57, no. 3 (2005): 226.

[52] Susan Costanzo, "The 1959 *Liriki-Fiziki* Debate: Going Public With the Private?," in *Borders of Socialism: Private Spheres of Soviet Russia*, ed. L. H. Siegelbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 251-68.

who supported "Iurii" and felt that science adequately and positively moulds human consciousness: "We live by the creativity of reason and not of feelings; we live by the poetry of experiments, theories, ideas, and construction. Our epoch demands the whole of man and we have no time to exclaim: 'Oh, Bach! Oh, Blok!'"[53] Although the debate failed to establish consensus, Boris Slutskii captured its spirit in his renowned poem "Fiziki i liriki," which appeared in *Literaturnaia gazeta* in October 1959. In it, Slutskii observes how the physicists are "in" and the poets are "out" not because of foul play on part of the scientists but simply because of "natural laws." The poem exudes a sense of a lost opportunity and regrets that artists squandered their chance affect popular consciousness.

It's not even disgraceful, But rather interesting Seeing how our rhymes and rhythms, Once so mightily revered, Cede esteem to logarithms, Fizzle out, and disappear.	Tak chto dazhe ne obidno, a skoree interesno nabliudat', kak, slovno pena, opadaiut nashi rifmy i velichie stepenno otstupaet v logarifmy.[54]

Nine Days, *Storm*, *Rainbow*, and *Robert* fueled this debate by presenting the scientist as the guardian of both scientific and ethical standards, suggesting that his moral rectitude mattered as much as (if not more) than his intelligence. Like contemporaneous writer Efim Dorosh, these filmmakers defined intelligence in moral terms: "Intelligence is a mark of a man whose opinions are entirely his own while a *meshchanin*, unconcerned with either fact or morals, is guided by so-called 'conventional wisdom'"[55] Thus the celluloid scientist became a Robin Hood type; although he could not speak or act as an ordinary guy on the

[53] Quoted in Marsh, *Soviet Fiction since Stalin*, 213.

[54] For the full translation see Irina E. Berlyand "A Few Words about Bibler's Dialogics," *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 47, no. 1 (2009): 28.

[55] B. Brainina, "Vernyi kurs, vernoe napravlenie," *Voprosy literatury* 1 (1965): 69.

street, he still bravely guarded and secured the common man's interests. The scientist-cum-defender of humanity battled nature, rather than the rich, to provide humanity with a better life. Courageously and nobly, he fought the odds, willing to lay down his life for the cause, but never sacrificed his moral principles to achieve his aim. Although the hero-*intelligent* appeared tantalizing on paper, authorities worried that this type of hero was not political enough, that he spent more time on screen pursuing his research than participating in the country's political life.

One of the earliest and most celebrated film icons, as brilliant as he was apolitical, was the nuclear physicist Dmitrii Alekseevich Gusev in M. I. Romm's 1961 motion picture *Nine Days of a Year*.[56] On the surface, the film is about nuclear physicists in a distant Siberian research institute and their efforts to create a thermonuclear reaction. The film begins with a successful experiment, during which both Gusev and his mentor, Sintsov, expose themselves to radiation. The amount of radiation Sintsov suffers is lethal and Gusev, who was exposed significantly less, takes over his mentor's project. Knowing that even the briefest additional exposure will kill Gusev, doctors insist that he dedicate himself to theoretical research. Gusev, however, categorically refuses, returning to continue the life-threatening investigation. During another successful test, the young physicist is fatally contaminated. His only hope is a surgical procedure that had never been performed on a human and which, the doctors believe, is bound to fail. The evening before the surgery, Gusev finds out that the final, lethal, experiment was not, in fact, a thermonuclear reaction,

[56] Although the making of the film began in 1961, the scriptwriter, Daniil Habrovitskii, recalls that he began working on a script about physicists three years prior to filming. See D. Habrovitskii, "Daniil Habrovitskii rasskazyvaet. . . ," Ofitsial'nyi sait narodnogo artista L'va Durova, http://www.levdurov.ru/show_arhive.php?&id=1147 (accessed March 5, 2009).

making his story all the more tragic. He thus subjects himself to a near-pointless operation in order to continue his mission.

It is clear that Gusev is the kind of socialist realist hero of whom Soviet critics ought to dream. A reviewer in a provincial newspaper was more than effusive in his praise, commenting that Gusev represents the future Soviet citizen. He is not only a contemporary ideal but also a sign of things to come, a harbinger of a Communist tomorrow. The critic argues: "He is remarkable in all respects; he is on the cutting edge of his epoch's discoveries, he cannot imagine life without active and creative work, and he sacrifices everything in the name of a noble cause."[57] Another critic also sang Gusev's praises: "The fate of the movie's hero ought to be an example of an outstanding, noble human life, which signifies not only a scientific, but also a civic and moral victory."[58] For these reviewers, Gusev was much more than a scientist; he was an embodiment of a moral ideal.

While Gusev seems to represent a relatively straightforward example of a socialist realist hero, art critics Valentin Liukov and Iurii Panov could not forgive the protagonist (or the other characters) for their "social myopia" (sotsial'naia blizorukost').[59] The authors argue that, on the face of it, the young scientist is "noble and humane by nature" and is "unconditionally committed to science, for which he is ready to sacrifice everything—even his own life." But, on second glance, it becomes clear that the hero is insufficiently socially-minded; his political and ideological horizons are too narrow. Panov and Liukov accuse the protagonist of spending too much time in the lab and not enough time censoring the heretical proclamations of his friend and colleague, Il'ia Kulikov. Where is Gusev's political

[57] I. Mikhailov, "Nash sovremennik," *Molot* (Rostov-on-Don), 28 March 1962, 4.

[58] A. Zorkii, "O fil'me 'Deviat dnei odnogo goda'," *Birobidzhanskaia pravda*, April 5, 1962, 2.

[59] V. Liukov and Iu. Panov, "Eto li gorizonty?" *Oktiabr'* 5 (1962): 186.

consciousness?, ask the two critics, when Kulikov proclaims that "his own convictions do not change depending on the latest newspaper headlines" and that "he is surrounded by cavemen and cretins who insist on dragging Marxian principles into science"? Panov and Liukov conclude that Gusev is heroic only when it comes to science: "Gusev is relentless in achieving his goal, but overly accommodating when it comes to defending his ideological beliefs." The authors claim that Gusev would hardly appear heroic if it were not for Kulikov's "arrogant nihilism." Ultimately, the reviewers conclude that the physicist's main fault is that he "is engaged in science for science's sake." They find his statement "One mustn't stop thinking" (*Mysl' ostanovit' nel'zia*) as too indulgent, too politically naïve.

This critique, however damning, was counteracted by glowing reviews by two other respected and influential cultural critics. I. Chicherov takes issue with Liukov's and Panov's review: "It is pointless to address their indictments; anyone who has seen the film will be forced to agree that everything that has been said about *Nine Days* is patently untrue."[60] Chicherov values the film for its portrayal of Gusev and Kulikov as worthy leaders of the nation's collective efforts toward scientific progress. Even the usually fault-finding L. Pogozheva praises the film for providing moviegoers food for thought instead of giving them ready-made answers.[61] Pogozheva also argues that the heretical Kulikov and Gusev are not different at their core: both heroes are incapable and unwilling to grandstand, and both approach contemporary issues with intelligence, progressiveness, and tact, both are interested in all problems affecting humanity. The critic reveled in the fact that the celluloid scientists live in an atmosphere charged with the anticipation for the discovery-to-be. Pogozheva poetically concludes that these are "the noble knights" of ideas transforming the world. *Nine*

[60] I. Chicherov, "Po-novomu o novom," *Voprosy literatury*, 12 (1962): 50.

[61] L. Pogozheva, "Poltora chasa razmyshlenii," *Iskusstvo kino* 4 (1962): 3.

Days served as a watershed in Soviet film history, in which the *intelligent* legitimated himself as a bona fide socialist realist hero. The scientist *intelligent* joined a motley crew of celluloid tropes—the Spartan revolutionary, the intrepid Civil War hero, the exultant milk maid, the cheery Cossack, and the brawny aviator—to provide moviegoers with an alternative vision of Soviet masculinity and convey an alternative *weltanschauung*.

Given the near universal warm welcome M. Mikaelian's 1965 film *Into the Storm* received, it is clear that *Nine Days* had made the "thinking for thinking's sake" attitude acceptable.[62] Like Romm's movie, at first glance *Storm* is a narrative about scientists trying to understand the dynamics behind storms in order to control them. Just as Gusev insists on conducting research in the thermonuclear chamber aware that he is potentially exposing himself to fatal doses of radiation, the young physicists in *Storm* fly into the epicenter of storm clouds, risking certain death, to get to the bottom of their research problems.

Although science is inextricably linked to this plot, the conflict is actually based on a question one of the protagonists, the young career-minded Oleg Tulin, asks his idealistic colleague and friend, Sergei Krylov: "Do you have to silence your own voice to get anywhere in life?" (*Nado li nastupat' na gorlo sobstvennoi pesne?*) In the same way that Kulikov's cynicism is contrasted to Gusev's moral high-mindedness, Tulin's opportunism is a foil to Krylov's ethical standards. Thus the real conflict is about moral compromise; Tulin's life consists of a series of calculated concessions while Krylov's life is defined by his inability to go against what he knows is right.

[62] *Into the Storm* was based on D. A. Granin's extremely popular 1961 novel of the same title; Granin also co-authored the script with the director. The book enjoyed great popularity with readers and critics alike, becoming a staple in literature courses. The novel is still taught in Russian classrooms as one of the Soviet classics.

The film begins in 1952. The opening scene features the two friends sitting next to each other in a university classroom, discussing a scientific problem while the professor is lecturing on the harms of cybernetics as "a bourgeois pseudo-science." The professor interrupts the pair and acerbically asks Krylov if he would rather be somewhere else since the lecture seems to be interfering with more pressing issues. Krylov responds without hesitation: "Yes, maybe that is a good suggestion. You see, cybernetics is simply mathematics and computer science and not some kind of pseudo-science." Instructed to see the dean following his heretical comments, Tulin advises his friend to: "Confess, show remorse, promise improvement, and tell them you were not understood correctly." And even though Sergei does as told at the beginning, he relapses during his interview with the dean, arguing that cybernetics is not a product of American reactionary politics but represents the way of the future. Krylov is expelled from the university but through sheer perseverance spanning several years becomes a member of a lab team dealing with the phenomenology of storms and storm clouds.

While a member of the research team, the talented and hardworking Sergei not only establishes his professional credentials but also affirms the necessity of remaining true to the principles of scientific research regardless of external, political pressures. Sergei's formative experience occurs as he witnesses his mentor, academic Dankevich, try to expose the fraudulent research of an opportunistic fellow "scientist." Dankevich's nemesis, academician Denisov, promises to subject storms to human control in the very near future. According to the objective research Dankevich has performed, however, it is obvious to any impartial observer that human control of inclement weather is very far off. The vast majority of Dankevich's friends and colleagues attempt to reason with the celebrated physicist that there

is no point in disputing research that has no scientific basis. Tulin charges Krylov to convince his mentor not to publicly discredit Denisov. He cynically proclaims that: "more often than not, truth suffers defeat in an argument" and that "the personality cult might be gone but its servants still remain." To the many warnings he receives, Dankevich simply responds: "If people are being deceived, we are obligated to speak the truth. Eh, we are still conditioned by the memories of our sinister past."

At the public hearing of Denisov's plan, the majority of those assembled accuse Dankevich of throwing public money to the wind. Denisov charges Dankevich with caring more about abstract theoretical subjects than about the wellbeing of the country's economy. Reminding Dankevich of the fact that Soviet citizens live in a planned economy, his opponents press him to reveal when his research will yield the kind of results Denisov's study projects for the immediate future. Dankevich admits that he cannot promise usable findings for the next ten to twenty years, and probably not even during his own lifetime. Denisov then further barbs his opponent by saying that the next ten years will be more of the same in that Dankevich's team will produce only unsuccessful test results. Unflustered, the old expert reminds everyone of the golden rule in scientific research: "Even failed experiments are valuable." As the chairman motions for a vote on the issue, Dankevich laconically objects that "problems in science should never decided by majority vote. Nature has ordered the world in such a way that incompetents (*bezdary*) always form the majority." Unsurprisingly, Denisov wins the argument as a champion of the agricultural sector, securing the bulk of state funding. Dankevich, defeated but implacable, continues his own research but dies from heart complications in the process.

In no uncertain terms, Mikaelian's film demonstrates the harm politicking and ideological bravado cause science. The principles behind scientific research are shown as a fairer and more far-sighted than rules governing the political system. This dynamic also makes scientists, as masculine figures, stand apart from ordinary men. At the same time, mastering theories and abstract concepts is clearly insufficient in the eyes of these directors. The scientist, as a gendered and moral ideal, must protect the laws that govern scientific study like a medieval knight protects his honor. By juxtaposing Krylov and Tulin, it is clear that Tulin is the lesser of the two, even though both are brilliant physicists. Krylov's incessant search for objective truth, regardless of consequence, contrasts sharply with Tulin's careerist maneuverings. Tulin is a positive figure in the sense that he is a champion of the kind of science Dankevich practiced, but he tolerates injustice and, in the process, becomes an accomplice to the wrongs being committed. Tulin lives in perpetual angst of how to make institutional and political dynamics play out in his favor. By contrast, Krylov's reasoning is straightforward: he never puts his science before his sense of what is right and wrong. He does not see the two as mutually exclusive. Thus the true heroes of *Storm* are Dankevich and Krylov who, in the words of an *Iskusstvo kino* reviewer, represent: "the paragons of human character and the personification of the mindset that seeks out truth relentlessly, impervious to the rule of authorities and established norms."[63]

Although moral integrity made scientists the archetypes of masculinity, filmmakers nonetheless accentuated a weakness of their heroes—their seeming disinterest in the emotional, lived reality of their contemporaries. Because these men dedicated themselves to cosmic problems and issues, people's feelings appear trivial by comparison. On the one hand, it is this perspective that allows them to rise above the petty political gamesmanship and act

[63] M. Zak, "Idti k tseli," *Iskusstvo kino*, 2 (1965): 17.

with the bigger picture in mind. The fact that science is on their side assures them that their vision will vindicate them. On the other hand, their seeming inability to identify with the more base human passions and instincts renders them cruel at times. In both *Nine Days* and *Storm*, the heroes have trouble maintaining long-term romantic relationships. Gusev alienates his wife Lelia, making her feel she were no better than a pet, while Krylov does little to win and keep the affection of his girlfriend, Lena. The more important relationships to both these physicists are their alter-egos: Kulikov and Tulin. Because they share the same interests, the same language, the same lifestyle, the men develop much more substantive emotional connections with each other than with their wives/girlfriends.

If Romm and Mikaelian develop the notion that men of science are strangers to the emotions that drive the rest of humanity, directors Georgii Iungval'd-Khil'kevich and Il'ia Ol'shargev treat the same phenomenon satirically in their productions. Their two motion pictures were being shot almost simultaneously and featured the same basic plot. Both films, *Rainbow Formula* and *They Called Him Robert*, tell a story of physicists/cyberneticists who invent android robots who look exactly like them. Through a series of coincidences, the robotic doppelgangers end up escaping the control of their creators, causing innumerable headaches to everyone involved. Both films were conceived in the comedy-of-errors genre; both the robots' interactions with passersby and the trouble the inventors have in capturing their creations produce a comedic and light-hearted mood. Nonetheless, a more serious message underlies these productions. Both heroes are so entirely consumed with their scientific projects that they have little time or interest for anything else. Paradoxically, although the work of these scientists is meant to benefit humanity, these experts have long lost their human touch.

As the previous chapter demonstrates, personality traits attached to the normative ideas about femininity gained traction during the Thaw period. Empathy, selflessness, tenderness, and patience were traits now associated with the celluloid father-figures who often learned life's most important lessons from their sons. This standard did not escape scientists, whose challenge was to find a median between thinking broadly enough to achieve monumental results but to remain grounded enough to benefit their communities in the here and now.

Iungval'd-Khil'kevich directly addresses the lack of emotiveness in Soviet society in his directorial debut *Rainbow Formula*. He points out in a *Soviet Screen* (Sovetskii ekran) interview that he wanted to comment on a phenomenon he termed "robotism."[64] Asked to clarify what he meant by this, the young director explained: "The thing is that robots are everywhere around us; they occupy important positions and walk beside us and we don't even notice it. It's even possible that robot-like characteristics exist in all of us." The movie's scriptwriter defined *robotism* as "the absence of soul, insensitive treatment of others, and a thoughtless consideration of deep problems." One of the main culprits of robotism is the scientist Vladimir Bantikov, who creates his robotic double, Iasha, to avoid the institute director's annoying demands that he attend innumerable and useless committee meetings, symposia, conferences, and seminars.

Because Bantikov made the robot self-regulating, Iasha begins to think of himself as superior to humans. Iasha resents the fact that he is controlled by an entity he considers primitive. He berates his designer and his kind for, what are, to his mind, grave weaknesses: sleeping, falling in love, getting sick. The robot authoritatively exclaims: "I ought to be in charge. You ought to stick to cleaning potatoes." Although the scientist tries to convince his

[64] G. Iungval'd-Khil'kevich, "Fil'm o robote," *Sovetskii ekran* 8 (1966): 5.

creation that positions of authority are best suited for humans precisely because they are emotionally perceptive and multifaceted, the robot maintains that effectiveness and productivity are the most important marks of a leader. Scared by Iasha's megalomania, Bantikov tries to dismantle "the monster" he can no longer control, but the robot escapes into the world, determined to govern people.

The relatively easy task of catching the delinquent android is complicated by the fact that Iasha invented a "plastifikator," which allows him to change his face at will. Bantikov instructs the police that, despite his ability to change his appearance, Iasha will be easily recognizable by robot-like qualities: lack of a sense of humor, lack of natural bodily movement, lack of empathy, and a lack of common sense. Unfortunately, the city is full of people, especially administrators, who do not exhibit basic human traits, making the search for Iasha problematic. The notion that Soviet society did not lack citizens and leaders suffering from *robotism* drew the ire of Goskino editors, who banned and shelved the film, accusing Iungval'd-Khil'kevich of spreading "anti-Soviet propaganda."[65] Although the May 1966 issue of *Soviet screen* enthusiastically announced that Soviet audiences would have a chance to watch Iungval'd-Khil'kevich's comedy in a couple of month's time, the premiere never took place.

Despite the fact that *Rainbow* was never released, it represents a valuable historical document about attitudes to science and the value of human emotion. Even though the action revolves around stopping Iasha's quest to rule the world, the cause for the unrest and panic is Bantikov. His wish to be able to dedicate himself exclusively to creating a formula that would permit him to summon the rainbow at will, leads him to construct a robot without thinking about the consequences of his actions. Even his love interest, Liusia, is angered that

[65] G. Iungval'd-Khil'kevich, *Za kadrom* (Moscow: Tsentrpoligraf, 2000), 69-73.

he “attempted to replace a living, feeling human being with a robot.” Thus the message in Bantikov’s example is that Thaw-era masculinity could not be defined solely by intellectual aptitude but required equal proportions of both emotional and cerebral strength.

Filmed at the same time as *Rainbow*, Il’ia Ol’shargev’s *His Name was Robert* features a young scientist, albeit a much more urbane and suave version, who makes an android. Unlike Bantikov, however, Sergei Kukin creates him to prove his genius. He names the “RB-235” unit Robert and, wishing to make his model the most advanced, releases him into the world. Robert’s interactions with the world are not what the scientist expects and Robert soon runs amok, unsuspected by any of those who surround him. As Kukin’s team tries to catch him without much success, he becomes increasingly curious about human emotions even though these feelings do not “compute.”

Unlike in *Rainbow*, the focus of *Robert* is not on seizing all robot-like characters and identifying the soulnessness of Soviet citizens. Instead, it is a story of a robot discovering the depth and breadth of human emotions and interpersonal relationships. The popular theme song for the film also accentuates the unique beauty of human feelings. Sung from the prospective of the robot, the lyrics make the case that even the most advanced android’s capabilities will fall short in trying to comprehend and replicate emotions. Eventually Kukin shelters Robert behind the walls of the institute even though Robert continues to insist he wants to understand what it means to experience emotion. The android understands that smelling grass after rain is not simply a tactile sensation but involves an emotional dimension he, as the cybernetics’ most perfect and exact creation, cannot acquire. The female protagonist, Tania, like Liusia in *Rainbow*, berates the scientist for making light of human feelings. In no uncertain terms Tania blames Kukin for the fiasco with Robert. She firmly

tells him that people like him—people who lack the most basic appreciation for emotional warmth—are ill-suited to be working with robots. Thus, in an ironic twist of events, a robot becomes more humane than his architect.

Rainbow and *Robert* illustrate the limits of science, or, rather, the limitations of science when conducted by men of limited vision. And, yet, Romm's and Mikaelian's films are anything but straightforward about the benefits of science and not exactly optimistic about man's ability to control nature for humanity's benefit. A cynic and pessimist and yet a brilliant mind, Kulikov challenges Gusev's idealism and his well-worn slogans and maxims. In a posh restaurant in Moscow, Kulikov barbs his friend and colleague about the purpose of his work and the sacrifices he is making. The urbane sophisticate mocks the idea that Gusev's attempts to create energy from neutrons will not be used for nefarious purposes. He provides his idealistic friend with numerous examples to prove his point: with the appearance of sophisticated chemistry, Germans created poison gas weapons; the invention of the internal combustion engine allowed the British to produce tanks; and the discovery of the atomic chain reaction gave the Americans the first atomic weapon. Thus Kulikov warns Gusev that his attempts to better humanity's material conditions are simultaneously inroads to the making of a new weapon. He rhetorically asks his college friend: "Do you think man has really become smarter in the past thirty thousand years? Not by an iota!" Looking around the restaurant, Kulikov implores Gusev to also cast a glance; compared to men and women who lived four thousand years ago, citizens of the "modern world" resemble Neanderthals in appearance. Moreover, Kulikov claims that the human race, regardless of political system, has regressed morally: "A Genghis Khan could have never thought of concentration camps and gas chambers."

A couple of other pointed scenes cast doubt on the fact that humanity had evolved enough to treat scientific discoveries responsibly and peacefully. At a wedding reception, two scientists are trying to explain to a well-meaning but oblivious woman the purpose and significance of Gusev's research. The plump middle-class woman bedecked in jewelry is simultaneously anxious and overly-confident about scientific issues—both reactions a product of her ignorance. To illustrate the principle behind Gusev research, the two men ask their interlocutor to imagine the energy contained in a hydrogen bomb. They tell her: "Well, Gusev wants to take this energy and put it to work." With a tone of panic in her voice, the woman asks: "Put the bomb to work?!" The experts elaborate that the particles needed for the kind of energy Gusev wants to create are present everywhere—even at their table. The woman, now amazed, exclaims: "Lord, how simple!" And although this episode aims to amuse, it confirms Kulikov's impression that the general public cares little about (and understands even less) modern science and therefore cannot be trusted with the era's most revolutionary discoveries.

Gusev's father, a simple Russian peasant, also wonders about the worth of the kind of research his son conducts, especially after he sees how damaged his son's health has become as a result of his experiments. During a rare heart-to-heart conversation, the father asks his son if his life's calling was worth the sacrifice. Although his son responds tersely that the cost was worth the price, the father insists: "Maybe it was all for nothing? Who needs it? (*Komu eto nuzhno?*)" At first, Gusev responds philosophically that man cannot stop thinking and that even if all current research was forgotten, future generations would, inevitably, cover the same tracks. In an effort to understand his son's perspective, Gusev senior simply asks: "Did you make the bomb?" The nuclear scientist answers in the affirmative and

justifies himself by saying that his participation in making the bomb ensured the safety of half the world's population. To the end, Gusev believes that even destructive discoveries are a product of peaceful intentions in the Soviet context. But even members of Gusev's own lab facility are divided. Romm lingers on a conversation between two specialists, one of whom is trying to convince the other that war is responsible for all of modern science's greatest discoveries; without military conflict, there would be no modern science.

It is clear, then, that some critics and officials objected to the movie's pessimistic tone and a lack of ideological rectitude. Georgii Kapralov, who worked on *Pravda's* editorial staff at the time of the film's Moscow premiere, recalls that many wanted *Pravda* to publish a disapproving review. The fact that one scientist dies at the beginning of the film and that the central character is on the brink of death at the story's end, combined with Kulikov's uncensored skepticism, created very negative attention for the film. According to Kapralov's recollections, the positive review he submitted sat unpublished for two weeks. On March 19, 1962, he received a call from the typographer in the middle of the night, informing him that a review of *Nine Days* had come out, but that it was not his. [66] The editor for the science section, Vladimir Orlov, had written a damning critique of the movie, condemning Kulikov's "heretical aphorisms of clearly Western origin." Incredulous, Orlov accused the film of misrepresenting the intellectual atmosphere of the scientific institute and Soviet scientific community. He commented: "It is hard to believe that these scientists only recently passed their exams on historical materialism."[67]

[66] Georgii Kapralov, "Kak sazdavat' intellektual'nye fil'my," Ofitsial'nyi sait narodnogo artista L'va Durova, http://www.levdurov.ru/show_arhive.php?&id=1150 (accessed March 5, 2009).

[67] V. Orlov, "Atomy i liudi," *Pravda*, March 20, 1962, 4.

While *Storm* lacks episodes and exchanges that reflect on the dangers and potentials of scientific discovery, it questions the future of science in a system that is heavily affected by ideology and internal politicking. The movie ends with Krylov and Tulin setting out to do research their mentor, Dankevich, had intended to complete. And as storm clouds gather above the pair of physicists in the final scene, one wonders how long before another change in the bureaucratic chain results in another series of bureaucratic battles for Krylov.

Conclusion

Although B. Slutskii's poem "Fiziki i liriki" announced that scientists and logarithms won out over poets and rhymes, filmmakers of the period showcased a masculinity that sought to accommodate both ways of approaching the world. The scientists striding across the Thaw-era silver screen possessed great insights into how the earth and the universe function. Post-Stalinist celluloid intellectuals struggled to understand their environment rather than conquer and control it. For these men, the process was as important as the product, if not more so. One of the reasons for this dynamic is that the period's filmmakers created an unconquerable world for their heroes. Moviemakers were not interested in depicting men during their moments of glory, but during the long stretches of time when their faith remains unshakeable despite the fact that the end is nowhere in sight.[68]

Reformist filmmakers who used the scientist as a protagonist found themselves in a position to revise two central aspects of Stalinist masculinity. First, since the de-Stalinization

[68] In his discussion of how the depiction of man within the environment transformed, film critic E. Margolit concludes that during the Thaw nature is not fighting with humans; it simply does not notice them. Despite nature's indifference to humans, it consistently overpowers them, effortlessly foiling their plans to bring the environment under man's control. See Evgenii Margolit, "Chelovek v peizazhe," in *Kinematograf ottepeli: Kniga pervaia. (*Moscow: Materik, 1996), 99-117. Also see Margolit's "Landscape, with Hero," in *Springtime for Soviet Cinema: Re/Viewing the 1960s*, ed. Alexander Prokhorov (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Russian Film Symposium, 2001), 29-50.

of the scientific establishment increased the autonomy of scientists conducting research, filmmakers applied the principles of objective and rational study to the human experience overall. In an ironic twist, the focus on science acted as a pretext to promote a de-ideologization of Soviet reality and morality. The masculinity of the scientist was defined by a profession that was largely outside the purview of ideologues. Unlike aviators, soldiers, and Stakhanovites before them, scientists were not beholden to a Five-Year-Plan mentality; scientific principles, rather than record-setting, governed their lives. Il'ia Kulikov, one of the protagonists in Romm's *Nine Days*, for instance, derides a slogan urging scientists to "discover a particle in this quarter." He scoffs at the institute's bureaucratese: "The discovery of a particle is a remarkable occurrence. What difference does it make if it happens during this quarter or at the beginning of the next?" While science and its practitioners were clearly in the service of the state/the people, their ultimate loyalty lay with scientific standards rather than ideological dogma. The attitude that there are laws—whether natural or moral—that take precedence over party dictums profoundly affected the era's understanding and depiction of masculinity.

Second, the image of the post-Stalinist scientist offers a novel view of nature and man's role in it. In contrast to Stalinist heroes who affirmed their masculinity by taming the elements and conquering nature, an ability to accept failure and continue fighting despite endless setbacks proved central to the masculinity of post-Stalinist scientists. Although the conventions of socialist realism obliged Thaw-era scriptwriters and directors to show the hero vanquishing the natural world, the day's films nonetheless tinged the happy ending with a dose of ambiguity: the successful solution of one scientific mystery marked the beginning of the next. The open-ended conclusions in these films conveyed the unorthodox idea that

man is, ultimately, relatively impotent when faced with forces of nature. *Rainbow* and *Robert*—the two films in which scientists create their android doppelganger—show man as incapable of mastering his own emotional world, let alone his environment. Thus the four unconventional and closely scrutinized films examined in this chapter use members of the scientific-technical intelligentsia to demonstrate that human mastery over nature is but a chimera. However brilliant the scientists and however cutting-edge their scientific approach, they have to calibrate their masculinity to correspond to the reality that their life is, at the end of the day, at the mercy of factors beyond their control and that their feats are, at best, temporary.

These films served as the intelligentsia's platform for launching a project that would define post-Stalinist morality while the scientist-*intelligent* embodied the new liberal ideals. The lives of these men revolved around laws and principles not subject to political authority and interpreted reality without an ideological perspective. In this way, the popularity of these celluloid heroes introduced a non-ideological, secular perspective to Soviet screens. Even science fiction films were more burdened with the party's ideological views on extraterrestrial life and interplanetary interaction. Thus films centered on abstract scientific problems were as important to the expression of intelligentsia's point of view as were, for example, public, impromptu, readings of uncensored poems.

As Vail' and Genis point out, however, the scientific community's unique social position turned out to be a Faustian bargain by the late 1960s.[69] Once the scientists joined the nation's socio-political elite, the party also forced them to support and advocate the party's agenda. As soon as the scientific establishment became a handmaiden of the state, it traded its outsider image for official funds, security, and privilege. As a result, scientists slowly

[69] Vail' and Genis, *Shestidesiatye*, 105.

disappeared from the nation's movie screens as symbols of a secular, un-ideologized masculinity. Nonetheless, the image of the quixotic, idealistic scientist remained alive in many of the dissident scientists who staunchly defended human rights and individual freedoms in subsequent decades.

Chapter 5

Selling Masculinity: The Effects of Foreign Blockbusters and Sociological Research on Soviet Celluloid Heroism

A 1964 article in Soviet Screen (*Sovetskii ekran,* hereafter SE) opened with the line: "At the end of the day, does anyone know what really goes on in a moviegoer's head?"[1] The quotation typifies the movie industry's preoccupation with understanding the psychology behind moviegoing trends. From the late 1950s onward, those involved with film production in particular and cultural politics in general struggled to explicate "the average moviegoer's" mentality. The country's ballooning movie theater repertoires, which offered approximately 150 foreign and domestic releases a year, made a more "scientific" approach to audience preferences imperative. This effort involved not only quantifying moviegoers' (dis)likes but also understanding the psychology underpinning consumer choices. The unparalleled popularity of foreign blockbusters among Soviet viewers propelled studies on consumer behavior. However hesitantly, party authorities and movie industry officials began to investigate how to lure away Soviet viewers from foreign blockbusters and to attract them to domestic productions, debating questions central to this mission: Why do Soviet citizens go to the movies?; Why do moviegoers choose one film over another?; What factors determine the success of a film?

Although necessary, sociological studies on moviegoing trends caused controversy because of the implicit assumption that audiences were the ultimate judge of a film's ideological value and artistic merit. In other words, by fixating on the moviegoer's opinion,

[1] Kh. N. Hersonskii, "'Kardiogramma' zritel'nogo zala,"*Sovetskii ekran* 8 (1964): 17.

this type of research made the success of a film dependent on audience approval rather than official pronouncements. In contrast to the Stalin era, when the party acted as the unchallenged representative and executor of the mythical "people's will," Khrushchev-era populism ensured that a film's fate was tied as firmly to box-office profits as it was to reviews in party publications. The voice of the people could no longer be easily evaded or ignored. A contemporary sociologist expressed this sentiment bluntly: "It is foolish when some film critics arrogate to themselves the exclusive right to speak in the name of the people. . . . The people are not a faceless mass with identical tastes."[2] In effect, public opinion polls exposed the heterogeneity among the populace and tempered the indisputability of the official point of view.

However unpalatable to unresponsive artistic and ideological authorities, the populist paradigm entrenched itself in public consciousness as sociological research once again became a valued and even fashionable discipline.[3] After a twenty-year moratorium on sociological research under Stalin, at the Twentieth Party Congress the party leadership pronounced sociological research indispensable to modernizing the country.[4] Although conservative officialdom still viewed sociology with suspicion and saw it as threatening the status quo, the first cohort of post-Stalin sociologists successfully tested accepted truisms about Soviet society. Sociologists of culture and leisure in particular began challenging heretofore conventional wisdom on audience reception and moviegoing practices.

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[2] V. N. Shubkin, "O konkretnykh issledovanniakh sotsial'nykh protsessov," *Kommunist* 3 (1965): 55.

[3] Soviet sociology was born sometime early in 1956, the year in which the Soviet Union for the first time sent a delegation to the World Congress of Sociology. In 1958 a decree of the Praesidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences ordained the formation of the Soviet Sociological Association.

[4] As E. A. Weinberg points out: "In addition to internal factors, a major stimulus to the revival of sociology in the USSR came from contact with the more highly developed sociology of Eastern Europe and in particular with Polish sociology." See *Sociology in the Soviet Union and Beyond: Social Enquiry and Social Change* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 9.

Because sociology made individuals, rather than entire classes, central social and historical actors, studies on moviegoing implied that some movies flopped not because moviegoers were (still) immature, but because directors, scriptwriters, and movie studio executives knew little about their target audiences. This data-backed viewpoint divided filmmakers, party functionaries, and ordinary citizens along philosophical, rather than professional, lines. Those who supported the notion that "the customer is always right" staked their legitimacy on the popular mandate. For instance, directors of blockbusters used record ticket sales to justify their ideologically "light" productions, such as comedies or adventure films. By 1965 even some influential party cadres advocated a remuneration system based almost exclusively on a film's profitability. The opponents of such attitudes promoted a more top-down approach, arguing that the masses required protection from their own ignorance, disguising their elitism by invoking ideological vigilance and calling for moral integrity. This group reflected the intelligentsia's and government's long-standing distrustful and patronizing view of the *narod*. Audience members were equally split. One faction believed that the general populace had matured sufficiently since the early days of Soviet power and did not require condescending coaching on which films to watch and which heroes to admire. Other moviegoers just as passionately defended the official *kul'turnost'* (literary, cultured-ness) campaign as necessary to raising the cultural lot of the (still) unsophisticated populace.

The extremely popular magazine SE not only registered the twists and turns of the debate on the dangers of foreign blockbusters and the inadequacy of the domestic repertoire but also decisively affected its outcome. The thin but richly illustrated publication was

intended to be "a mass circulation organ for film advertising."[5] It promoted a viewer-centered film experience, focusing on advertising new films rather than evaluating them. As such, the publication embodied the notion that the film experience was subjective and one of affect; readers could pronounce their own verdicts on the movies they saw. Throughout its existence[6], SE strove to reflect audience tastes, especially with its annual voters' choice awards, the results of which were frequently at odds with accolades given by political officials and some artistic elites. By featuring little professional film criticism and instead concentrating on cinema as mass entertainment, SE became a site where viewers could discuss films on a par with established film critics. In fact, SE regularly published viewer responses that contested the opinions of professional cinephiles. In 1958 one SE reader, for instance, disapprovingly responded to a critic's (patronizing) assertion that the publication should "develop the moviegoer's taste and gradually introduce him to the complex and captivating world of film:" "From up on high, you presume that the Soviet viewer was born yesterday, that he could not discern bad from good forty years after the October Revolution, and that he needs a 'wise guide'?"[7]

The recognition that foreign heroes were more profitable and more popular than Soviet ones led some in the movie industry to question the utility of the self-conscious, introspective heroes that had arisen since Stalin's death during the process of de-Stalinization. Increasingly, film industry representatives talked about returning to the

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[5] RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 78, l. 7.

[6] By 1957 *Sovetskii ekran* had a long history and underwent various incarnations. Between January and April 1925, SE was, at different times, an insert in journals such as *Ekran*, *Kino-gazeta*, and *Rabochaia kino-gazeta*. By April 1925, SE already became a publication in its own right, with a circulation of 45,000. Between 1929 and 1941, SE was published under the title *Kino i zhizn'* but ceased publication altogether from the beginning of the Second World War until its first reappearance in January 1957.

[7] RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 78, l. 30.

(hyper)masculine archetype reminiscent of the Stalinist period. Thus Soviet filmmakers faced the difficult task of producing protagonists that were relevant to audiences and brought in the necessary cash flow without contradicting or questioning sacred ideological imperatives. This confluence of pressures negatively impacted directors who produced "smart" films, i.e. dramas that focused more on examining the inner lives of their protagonists than on an enthralling plot and exotic setting.

As attendance figures between 1960 and 1970 attest, filmmakers of dramas with a philosophical bent faced an uphill battle. Soviet citizens favored comedies and adventure films over other genres; the four top grossing movies of the decade were slapstick comedies, which sold two to three times as many tickets as films that both filmmakers and the authorities hailed as contemporary socialist realist masterpieces. (See appendix, Table 1.1.) Moreover, the most popular comedies and adventure films of the 1960s outsold the decade's most popular dramas at a three to one ratio. (See appendix, Table 1.2.) For instance, even the extremely popular anti-Stalinist *Clear Skies*, which won the top prize at the 1961 Moscow Film Festival, could not compete with the escapist genres that guaranteed blockbuster status. Furthermore, ticket sales data for a sampling of foreign films popular during the 1960s shows that directors of "serious" Soviet dramas also had to contend with foreign comedies and adventure films—and often failed. (See appendix, Table 1.3.) Ticket sale figures for non-Soviet productions are all the more impressive considering that party officials strictly curtailed the number of copies available for nationwide distribution.

This is not to say that Soviet masterpieces such as *Hamlet* or *Nine Days of a Year* proved unsuccessful with the mass viewer. After all, attendance figures averaging twenty million illustrate a genuine popular interest in domestic feature productions. However, it is clear the

directors who aimed to propagate a fundamental turn away from the Stalinist mentality with their reflective heroes failed at universalizing their vision for a post-Stalinist society. The liberal intelligentsia's condescending attempts to educate the magazine's subscribers how to correctly approach art ended disastrously as readers passionately defended their right to choose which movie to watch and which heroes to admire. Although reformist filmmakers adeptly maneuvered institutional and bureaucratic barriers, they could not (or were unwilling to) master the commercial side of the movie business; their ordinary reflective heroes rarely broke box-office records and did not always successfully compete against escapist fare. Their oversight in this regard hampered their efforts to successfully de-Stalinize the Soviet mentality and the socialist realist aesthetic.

Waiting for Chapaev: Official Anxieties Over the Waning Popularity of Soviet Heroes

The party's and the film industry's concerns that moviegoers (especially young ones) were unhealthily fixated on foreign masculinities dovetailed with their anxiety over the anemic nature of Soviet celluloid masculinity. During the 1956 conference on how best to represent young celluloid heroes, renowned film critic R. N. Iurenev declared that the entire industry is to blame for the fact that tasteless Austrian films are so popular with Soviet audiences: "Foreign imports will remain the rage until we produce enough motion pictures that captivate viewers."[8] The Soviet scriptwriter V. M. Kreps observed a similar trend seven years later: "Foreign films sell many more tickets in comparison to domestic films. . . . This state of affairs is due to the fact that our movies are no longer entertaining."[9] In a book on

[8] This conference was sponsored by the Cinematographers' Union. See RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 347, l. 36.

[9] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 690, ll. 80-81.

celluloid heroism, art critic E. S. Gromov echoed the above sentiments, concluding that foreign movies surpass domestic productions in ticket sales because non-Soviet motion pictures feature handsome, daring, and confident heroes. He related hearing a female textile mill worker admit that although she found *The Magnificent Seven* to be an empty (*pustoi*) film, the heroes' good looks, suaveness, and vigor captivated her. Gromov argued that cowboys, musketeers, and swashbucklers of all sorts occupied such a prominent place in the popular imagination due to the fact that Soviet filmmakers offered no alternatives; he gravely concluded that "the 'definitive' contemporary hero has not yet been created."[10]

To solve the imbalance, a segment of the movie industry maintained that celluloid heroes from earlier periods represent optimal models on which to build contemporary representations of masculinity. Again and again the opponents to the reformist approach to filmmaking argued that the semi-autobiographical stories of 1930s heroes still provided optimal models for Soviet cinematography. The most frequently cited examples included: Vasilii Chapaev, the gruff, though, fearless Civil War captain; Pavel Korchagin, the Civil War hero who sacrificed all for the Bolshevik cause; Maksim Gorky, one of the most famous Soviet writers and the founder of the socialist realist tradition; and Aleksei Mares'ev, the World War Two fighter pilot who resumed fighting the Nazis despite the fact that both of his legs had to be amputated below the knee. Since these idealized historical figures both embodied the socialist realist tradition and figured prominently in the popular imagination, some filmmakers argued that only this type of (super)hero could successfully compete with the bigger-than-life Hollywood and Bollywood stars of the 1950s and 1960s.[11]

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[10] E. S. Gromov, *Vremia, geroi, zritel'* (Moscow: Molodaia gvardiia, 1965), 64.

[11] Since the mid-1950s, Soviet audiences, particularly in the Caucuses and Central Asia, had been avid fans of Indian cinematography. Tens of millions of moviegoers watched Bollywood blockbusters during the

These filmmakers were not advocating a wholesale return of the Stalinist aesthetic, but rather a return to the scale of Stalinist feature films. In 1963, for example, cinema critic V. I. Tolstykh and his colleagues fretted about the popularity of *The Three Musketeers*—inside and outside the movie theater.[12] They recalled how the legendary 1934 film *Chapaev* had profoundly affected their lives. Because of the memorable and striking protagonist, an entire generation played "Reds" and "Whites," all of the boys wanting to grow up to be just like Chapaev. Tolstykh commented: "somewhere along the line we forsook the (cinematic) traditions of the 1930s and 1940s." Several participants agreed with Tolstykh's diagnosis. One exclaimed, "Nowadays all the children want to be musketeers," while another added, "Because there's nothing else offered."[13] On another occasion that same year, art critic R. N. Iurenev reminisced about S. A. Gerasimov's 1936 *The Fearless Seven*. He mused nostalgically about the narrative that told of an expedition of young explorers braving and ultimately subjugating the inhospitable Arctic to human will: "Gerasimov admirably expressed the romanticism that defined my generation's desire to conquer new lands, dominate the Arctic, and break world records in flight distance and speed." [14] Another distinguished cultural critic, N. N. Klado, discussed how contemporary "heroes" cannot even

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1950s and 1960s. Some of the smash hits from the period include: *Vagabond* (Brodiaga), 1951, dir. Raj Kapoor, *Mr. 420* (Gospodin 420), 1955, dir. Raj Kapoor, *A Flower in the Dust* (Tsvetok v pyli), 1959, dir. Yash Chopra, *Flower and Stone* (Tsvetok i kamen'), 1966, dir. OP.P. Ralhan, and *Ram and Shiam* (Ram i Shiam), 1967, dir. Tapi Chanakya. For a detailed discussion of phenomenal popularity Indian cinema enjoyed in post-Stalinist Soviet Union see Sudha Rajagopalan, *Indian Films in Soviet Cinema: The Culture of Movie-going after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).

[12] They were referring to Bernard Borderie's 1961 version: *Les trois mousquetaires: La vengeance de Milady.*

[13] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 227, l. 24. The comment was made during a preparation for the Plenum of the Communist Party's Central Committee on Ideological Issues on March 22, 1963.

[14] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 917, l. 7.

compare to the film icons of the past; he felt that the Red Army commander Chapaev and the brave pilot Mares'ev, unlike post-Stalin heroes, will remain role models for centuries to come.[15]

Not only filmmakers expressed concern about the public's infatuation with "bourgeois" masculinities. A governmental report on moviegoing trends noted with concern that movie theater personnel across the country broke rules by allowing children under sixteen to watch the majority of evening screenings of foreign films while very few attended movies focusing on the country's (revolutionary) past. Instead of Chapaev, or the cast of *The Fearless Seven*, Soviet youngsters were enamored with French adventurers. The authors of the report brought up the eleven-year-old Nupales Guntars from Latvia as a representative example; the youth wanted to be just like the protagonist of the French blockbuster *Parisian Secrets* (Les Mystères de Paris, 1962), starring the dashing Jean Marais. Party officials were concerned that local movie theater managers gave primacy to these foreign films, which "contained untold quantities of bourgeois ideology."[16]

Even N. S. Khrushchev, who presided over and encouraged the industry's renaissance during the Thaw, weighed in on the debate. During a meeting with the artistic intelligentsia on March 8, 1963, he noted in an uncharacteristically subdued fashion: "It is very disconcerting to see so many second-rate movies on Soviet screens. These films induce sleepiness, boredom, and melancholy with their dull plots and unexciting styles."[17] Two years after the general secretary announced the construction of communism by 1980 at the 1961 Twenty-second Party Congress, he expressed concern about a lack of productions that focused on something other than the personal, intimate sufferings of an unassuming hero. Khrushchev's sentiments were not at all unique; elements in the movie industry had publicly

[15] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 899, l. 102.

[16] RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 55, l. 55.

[17] Tribuna zritelia, *Sovetskii ekran* 7 (1963): 13.

and repeatedly argued that the film community must develop bolder heroes. In his 1961 address to the Cinematographers' Union, veteran scriptwriter and Stalin Prize winner, A. Ia. Kapler, argued: "It seems to me that the scale of ideas, the scale of heroes has shrunk beyond recognition. Take, for example, the concept behind either the 1930s heroes Maksim or Chapaev and you immediately notice the philosophical weightiness that stands behind those figures! A return to such grand proportions and grand affect is indispensable for us."[18] During the same union meeting, noted playwright A. D. Salynskii exclaimed: "Give us a hero already—a real hero who mobilizes people and does not depress them."[19] Commenting on the significance of the Twenty-second Party Congress, G. N. Chukhrai remarked on the need to create a hero worthy of the country's historic mission: "Each one of us is obligated to help Soviet citizens reach the moral ideal, which is now also the ideal for humanity as a whole."[20]

The segment of the movie industry that saw anemic Soviet heroes as enabling the popularity of foreign heroes also contended that the studios did themselves a disservice by producing so many melodramas dealing with contemporary Soviet life. These directors and critics averred that the predominance of this genre led to a dangerous repertoire imbalance, creating an unhealthy infatuation with foreign comics, adventurers, and singers. Thus part of the draw to foreign heroes had as much to do with the genre as it did with the attractiveness of the heroes themselves. After all, the western, the action-thriller, and the romantic comedy are genres Hollywood perfected and Soviet directors had trouble replicating without fearing accusations of either Stalinist dogmatism or blind subservience to bourgeois trends. Nonetheless, a portion of the cinematographers argued that the overproduction of

[18] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 123, l. 53.

[19] Ibid., l. 79.

[20] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 155, l. 21.

"intellectual" dramas with their cerebral and fallible protagonists harmed the industry as much as the personality cult since the dramatic genre's lack of allure and sensationalism made foreign fare that much more appealing to Soviet audiences.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, much ink was spilled on why comedies and adventure films were not adequately represented in cinemas. The lack, and sometimes a complete absence of, musical comedy, suspense thrillers, and adventure films—the mainstay of the Hollywood-inspired Stalinist repertoire—allowed foreign imports to fill the void created by the post-Stalinist movie industry. A title of an article written by the master of comedy E. Riazanov, "About Comedies—For the Thousandth Time," illustrates the level of frustration some in the movie industry felt about the scarcity of comedies in the Soviet Union.[21] A SE correspondent underlined the tremendous demand for comedy and other, less weighty, genres: "The fact that forty million people watched the comedy *Careful, Granny!* (Ostorozhno, babushka!) . . . demonstrates a hunger for optimistic, cheerful, life-affirming films that would relax and entertain the viewer."[22] Similarly, veteran director I. A. Pyr'ev observed during a Cinematographers' Union meeting in 1961: "For the second or third New Years running, I watched TV clips from old American and French films. I delighted in Fred Astaire's dancing and the singing of Deanna Durbin, Maurice Chevalier, and Josephine Baker. Could it be that we are incapable of making movies with cheery songs and enjoyable dancing?" And although Pyr'ev expressed optimism for a change in the situation, he concluded by saying that the list of 114 films planned for 1962 included no musical comedies, and no adventure or suspense films.[23]

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[21] E. Riazanov, "Tysiachnyi raz o komedii," *Sovetskii ekran* 16 (1963): 2.

[22] N. Kiiashchenko, "Kino i zritel'," *Sovetskii ekran* 2 (1963): 20.

Filmmakers (and the critics who supported them) who wanted to intellectualize Soviet film by turning away from Stalin's penchant for Hollywood-esque aesthetics, insisted that cinema no longer be treated as a purely prescriptive and proscriptive medium as it had been under Stalin. These directors and critics maintained that movies should not be criticized for how closely they corresponded to the viewer's perceptions of reality; they maintained that both reviewers and audience members should cease criticizing movies simply because of the way they depicted particular professions, age groups, or party members. A worker or party member no longer stood in for the whole; heroes represented only themselves and not their social class, their sex, or their profession. Over and over again, directors and critics who aimed to redefine the socialist realist tradition instructed viewers to discard the notion that movies must provide a sense of a hermetic and perfectly ordered universe.[24] Stalinist heroes offered definitive answers to all of life's questions while their successors were meant to provoke skepticism and reflection. And while the revelations of Stalinist transgressions inclined directors and party elites to less controversial issues that focused on the intrapersonal and private lives of Soviet citizens in the late 1950s, by the early 1960s (and especially after the Twenty-second Party Congress) more and more filmmakers called for bolder, more ambitious themes and characters.

For their part, filmmakers who propagated the (melo)dramatic genre with its reflective and emotive heroes responded to these charges claiming that their work faced significant external obstacles. They argued that their films fared worse than their competition not because foreign productions were intrinsically better but because Soviet audiences still expected films to provide

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[23] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 151, ll. 41-42.

[24] See, for instance, Ia. Varshavskii, "Poteri v zritel'nom zale," *Sovetskii ekran* 5 (1960): 8-9, G. Kremlev, "Sporim o 'Pervom svidanii'," *Sovetskii ekran* 22 (1960): 17, Ia. Varshavskii, "Navstrechu drug drugu," *Sovetskii ekran* 3 (1964): 12-14, A. Vartanov, "Chto vy ishchete v kinoiskusstve?," *Sovetskii ekran* 4 (1964): 13-14, and Ia. Varshavskii, "Iz zhizni fil'ma," *Sovetskii ekran* 9 (1966): 14-15.

the kind of escapism Stalinist propaganda afforded them only a decade earlier and because movie theater managers catered to the lowest common denominator. Film critics who supported the reformist directors also attributed the dominance of foreign film heroes to the low priority the government and local movie theaters gave aesthetic education. For instance, these critics explicitly "coached" the SE readership how to properly appreciate post-Stalinist cinematics.

A discussion of SE's work demonstrates how the critics' carping against most popular escapist films and their condescending tutorials on how to appreciate "smart" films worked against their efforts to advance a post-Stalinist agenda and a different kind of masculinity. While the directors under attack for their lackluster protagonists defended their creations by arguing their films combated Stalinist mentality, they simultaneously maintained that financial self-interest of local movie managers across the country unjustly ensured Hollywood's and Bollywood's dominance of Soviet screens. Scriptwriter and cinema expert, K. Khersonskii, recalled a two-day raucous debate in 1963 during which those in charge of the commercial part of the industry accused the artists of not producing films that would actually spark viewer interest while the artists retorted that their films would be better attended if theater managers possessed better tastes and knew how to propagandize the innovative, original domestic productions.[25] The movie managers openly charged filmmakers of being oblivious to the populace's needs while elements of the artistic intelligentsia painted themselves as protectors of the Soviet artistic traditions against an invasion of bourgeois philistinism.

Government officials also expressed concern about local repertoire politics, but not for the same reasons as the anti-Stalinist reformist filmmakers. Party authorities feared that contemporary socialist realist masterpieces were not reaching wide enough audiences—particularly in the non-Russian republics. Acting on this anxiety, members of the Communist

[25] Khersonskii, "'Kardiogramma'," 17.

Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers conducted a cross-country investigation of the day-to-day operations of movie theaters (*kinoobsluzhivanie naseleniia*) in 1963. In April 1964 the ideological section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party circulated a report damning the lack of attention movie theaters paid to their propaganda obligations. The taskforce visited each republic to determine the logic of local film distribution and the dynamics affecting attendance figures to measure the effectiveness of local propaganda. The taskforce concluded that, almost without exception, in all parts of the Soviet Union foreign movies of suspect moral and ideological quality received more attention and more screen time than "high quality" Soviet films. The report featured the same refrain: the local party leadership is responsible for allowing cinema managers to demonstrate the best Soviet films in favor of foreign blockbusters because of a fixation on making a profit. These findings supported the liberal intelligentsia's angst that local movie managers neglected their more complex films as well.

Although the officials diagnosed all the republics with the same malaise, the non-Russian republics came under particular scrutiny and pressure for their tepid reception of Soviet films and ardent enthusiasm for foreign fare. For instance, approximately 5 percent of the Georgian population saw the famed 1961 Russian feature *Nine Days of a Year* during the first year of its release while 53 percent went to see the French hit movie *The Three Musketeers* during the same period.[26] In the Uzbek capital of Tashkent the situation was no better. Movie theaters showed the 1960 Hollywood western *The Magnificent Seven* a total of 170 times and the 1955 musical *Oklahoma* 50 times while a domestic contemporary classic, *A Ballad of a Soldier*, was afforded only 11 showings during the same year. [27] This state of

[26] RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 112, l. 18.

affairs was all the more frustrating since Soviet authorities on average released six times more copies of Soviet films in the republics. For example, in 1963 the Latvian republic received 419 copies of the latest 50 Soviet productions and only 64 copies of the 10 newly imported foreign movies. Despite this distribution strategy, the cinemas of the Latvian capital, Riga, screened twice as many Western motion pictures than Soviet films.[28]

The report summaries for each republic argued that the root of the problem lay in the lack of party supervision over local cinema managers who were neither ideologically reliable nor aesthetically educated. The authors of the report also made the specious argument that audiences watched US, Indian, Italian, and French films only because movie managers operated under the inaccurate assumption that foreign films would successfully fulfill the plan and therefore screened them twice as often and during the best time slots. The taskforce therefore concluded that the statistics indicating a high level of interest in non-Soviet cinema should be interpreted as artificial due to the interference of incompetent personnel. The report remarks on a paradoxical phenomenon: local cinema managers habitually replaced Soviet films with foreign ones even when the Soviet movies attracted higher numbers of viewers. For instance, the movie theater Daugava in the city of Daugavpils in Latvia was reported to have replaced the Soviet *Optimistic Tragedy* with the 1942 American comedy *To Be or Not to Be*, despite the fact that the latter was less profitable than the former.[29] Although these conclusions are highly suspect since it is hard to believe that cinema managers would promote films that would jeopardize their finances, it allowed party officials to save face, blaming the movie theater administration for the low attendance figures for movies on Lenin.

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[27] Ibid., l. 56.

[28] Ibid., l. 105.

[29] Ibid., l. 103.

They argued that the Soviet populace would, in fact, attend patriotic and historic films in larger numbers if the poorly trained movie theater personnel would cease hijacking the repertoire by forcing foreign films on the powerless moviegoers.

The *Sovetskii ekran* Phenomenon

In spite of claims that corrupt local repertoire policies sustained the populace's fondness for escapist productions, proponents of "serious" domestic fare could not stem the popularity of foreign imports among Soviet moviegoers. In fact, their (sometimes patronizing) attempts to educate Soviet moviegoers on how to distinguish "true film art" from "cheap imitations" on the pages of SE provoked an angry reaction from a vocal group of the magazine's subscribers. These readers' rejection of the critics' didactic lessons began a nearly decade-long debate on audience autonomy, the role of cinema in everyday life, and the sociopolitical role of the intelligentsia. By the early 1960s, a vociferous portion of SE subscribers, encouraged no doubt by the magazine's self-proclaimed mission to cater to the "mass viewer," more and more resolutely rebuffed what they interpreted to be professional reviewers' snobbery. In effect, the experts had to approach the question of audience taste and their love of escapist fare more diplomatically while simultaneously defending the movies and heroes they felt ensured a de-Stalinization of Soviet intellectual and artistic life. To adjust to viewers' demands meant that the movie industry had to become a servant to people's will rather than an enforcer of socialist morality. Although this principle applied equally to directors of cerebral dramas and conformist socialist realist hagiographies, it affected the former group more since the political authorities viewed the ambiguity of their film's "message" with increasing suspicion.

The debate outlined above raised the question of whether cinema could and should be used simply to entertain. After all, building communism was a serious affair. Could Soviet celluloid masculinity sacrifice its educational function to entertain the toiling masses? The debate on who decided which films were appropriate for Soviet audiences tied into a larger one about how far cultural elites could go in policing the aesthetic and ideological views of the general populace. In other words, the critics were not only defending melodramas but also their own status as cultural authorities. Thus two parallel discussions evolved simultaneously on the pages of SE: one on which type of masculinity should be considered most appropriate for the post-Stalinist period and one on whether critics should speak and make decisions on behalf of the moviegoing public.

SE proved to be the decisive catalyst in mediating these questions. As one of the nation's most coveted publications, the magazine faced the tough task of pleasing two masters. As an official publication of the Ministry of Culture (and later of the Cinematographers' Union), its mission involved teaching readers to "accurately" understand the trends in the movie industry. At the same time, the publication proclaimed the "mass viewer" to be its target audience. The SE editorial board had to toe the official line while it satisfied a diverse reading audience which was, for the most part, averse to ideological sermons in the moviegoing context. Over time, SE became increasingly viewer-centered and used its astronomic subscription rates to fend off detractors who complained about the magazine's lack of ideological focus.

The magazine, which was available to only 200,000 lucky subscribers in 1957, quickly turned into the nation's most popular journal and, by 1966, had a press run of over

2.6 million.[30] The reasons for its popularity were many: its light, colorful, and vibrant design; photographs of domestic and foreign celebrities; travelogues about (exotic) countries hosting film festivals; and articles on popular film trends, such as westerns and Bollywood melodramas. The diversity of SE's content made it much more than a film magazine; it provided its readership a window to the outside world, a sense of changing fashions, and an outlet for popular points of view. Subscribers did not always use SE to glean critical insight into a particular movie but, instead, cut out photographs of their favorite actors and actresses, decorating their walls with them. As such, SE could be described as a lifestyle magazine, explaining its sky-high subscription rates and a reading audience that cut across gender, generational, national, and socioeconomic lines.

SE advocated on behalf of its massive readership in a number of ways. First, the magazine regularly reported on moviegoers' informal meetings with film casts, filmmakers, and scriptwriters. A writer summarized the rationale behind one such event: "Viewer response both improves the movie industry's sense of audience impressions and serves as an indispensable guide for future artistic endeavors."[31] Although the extent to which journalists edited these rubrics is unclear, opinions expressed in the great majority of these reports ran the gamut from supercilious to disdainful, reflecting audience diversity. Second, SE frequently published its readers' letters. This portion of the magazine was usually termed "the moviegoer's soapbox" (*tribuna zritelia*). Here readers could laud or criticize a specific film, complain about a trend in the movie industry, or slam local officials for giving

[30] The number of copies, however, does not tell the whole story. Namely, in 1965 the SE editorial board included a question in their annual viewers' choice award survey, asking the respondents how many people read each copy they received. The survey indicates that, on average, between four and five people read each copy. In other words, the number of readers was much greater than the official subscription numbers revealed. See RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 44, l. 4.

[31] "Slovo imeet zritel'," *Sovetskii ekran* 18 (1963): 14.

inadequate attention to the conditions of local cinemas. If a critic's review of a popular film triggered an avalanche of complaints, the board would usually publish the correspondence deemed representative. Even though these reader responses were not always published with additional (corrective) commentary, the opposing views were nonetheless published and recognized as having merit. In any event, throughout the 1960s, SE received several hundred letters daily, suggesting that subscribers felt their views and opinions mattered.[32]

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, in 1959 the magazine began conducting an annual survey of the most popular domestic film productions and performers. As the only other barometer of popular preferences (with the exception of ticket sales), the SE viewers' choice awards became a matter of prestige in the movie industry. What began as a modest experiment to determine the year's favorite Soviet film turned into a notable event in the life of the country and the industry. The yearly contest was particularly momentous in the Soviet system because not all movies received the same distribution; movies would be ranked according to categories and the assigned category determined both the number of copies that movie merited and whether the movie would be shown locally or nationally. Thus, although few movies were actually shelved during 1950s and 1960s, many problematic movies suffered cripplingly restrictive distribution. The SE survey could consequently act as a corrective to the often arbitrary decision-making of the studios or the ministries. For instance, 15 percent of SE subscribers who saw M. Khutsiev's controversial 1966 movie *July Rain* (Iul'skii dozhd') voted it the year's worst film while 10 percent of the respondents considered it the year's best. Thus, despite its limited circulation and negative press, the contentious production continued to attract attention. Equally notable were the absences in the top-ten

[32] According to the Cinematographers' Union figures, by 1964 SE received more than 6,000 letters a month. See RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 112, l. 12.

list. For example, S. Iutkevich's 1957 film *Stories About Lenin* (Rasskazy o Lenine) or L. Kulidzhanov's 1963 Lenin-inspired *The Blue Notebook* (Siniaia tetrad') were not only poorly attended (eleven and eight million tickets sold, respectively) but also failed to make it onto the SE chart. Although SE's survey of 40,000 respondents did not provide a representative sample, composed as it was of self-selected movie enthusiasts, it complicated the authorities' tradition of pronouncing unqualified and definitive judgments about "the Soviet people."

Extremely popular with readers from the very beginning, the viewers' choice awards developed even further to reflect its audiences' preferences. By 1966 the SE staff began differentiating the respondents' age, sex, occupation, educational level, and place of residence. By 1968 the survey had grown in scope and size: approximately 45,000 ballots were cast for best Soviet and foreign film as well as for top actors and actresses at home and abroad.[33] The enthusiasm for the survey was also evident in the fact that entire families, kolkhoz collectives, army units, and apartment complexes voted together on one ballot. Although these collectives would use a single ballot, each individual's vote would be recorded separately. Consequently, the total number of votes for a given film was usually much higher than the total number of surveys received. And since the number of surveys was limited, some movie theaters and cinema distribution centers would voluntarily copy and reproduce the official SE survey, circulating it to moviegoers and even designating a special post office box where all the responses could be collected locally.[34] Although critics also weighed in with their choices once the results were announced, it was clear that the vote of thousands was more relevant than the opinions of the respected few. Filmmaker Grigorii

[33] SE first reported the total number of votes cast in 1961, when the magazine received 24 thousand ballots. See "Itogi nashego konkursa kinofil'mov 1961 goda," *Sovetskii ekran* 10 (1962): 1.

[34] Ibid., 2.

Chukhrai echoed this sentiment when he received the SE viewers' choice award for the best film of 1961: "To tell you the truth, I do not have total confidence in the reviews of professional critics. After all, twenty people could be wrong; their evaluations could be based on a number of extraneous factors. But a jury of many thousands cannot be swayed in a similar way."[35]

Thus SE actively but indirectly promoted the populist notion that movie ticket sales, viewers' choice awards, and readers' letters represented a more organic and legitimate testimony of a film's value. This attitude cropped up throughout the magazine's pages. The implicit assumption behind the work of the magazine boiled down to the question: Could thirty million or forty million viewers be wrong about a movie? SE infrequently printed statements that painted professional critics—whether or not they favored liberalizing the socialist realist tradition—as not being entirely "in touch with the people." During an informal meeting of movie industry representatives with kolkhoz workers of the Moscow region, the actor B. Andreev was quoted as saying: "Why do only professional critics review movies about kolkhoz life? Why don't kolkhoz workers themselves write about what movies they've liked, disliked, and still expect to see on our screens?"[36] In a SE editorial F. Kuziaev admonished the filmmakers to "respect audience demands."[37] As the person in charge of film revenue at the Ministry of Culture, Kuziaev was concerned that the average attendance rate for each Soviet film fell from twenty-one million in 1955 to eighteen million in 1959. Clearly, many factors could have contributed to the fall of ticket sales (such as the proliferation of TV sets), but Kuziaev blamed filmmakers for underestimating the tastes and

[35] N. Pizhurina, "Ot imeni 24, 000," *Sovetskii ekran* 13 (1962): 2.

[36] "Truzheniki sela v dome kino," *Sovetskii ekran* 2 (1960): 2.

[37] F. Kuziaev, "Uvazhat' zaprosy zritelei," *Sovetskii ekran* 2 (1960): 1

expectations of Soviet viewers. More unforgiving was a regular moviegoer, A. Surovegin, who spoke during a two-day symposium entitled "Cinema and Contemporaneity": "Two days after a movie premiere one magazine will publish a saccharine review only to be followed by a negative critique two days later. . . . All of this is due to the fact that critics are unaware of the viewers' attitudes and needs."[38] Even film critic E. Smirnova was concerned about the lack of a coherent agenda for film criticism: "Despite the progress in this area, film criticism has still not earned a prominent position in the industry. The theoretical basis is poorly developed. . . . Without a theoretical framework there can be no substantive critical agreement."[39]

However popular with readers, SE came under fire from political and artistic authorities who feared that the magazine was doing little to raise the level of the average viewer's aesthetic discernment. A year after SE had begun publication, an anonymous critic penned a damning critique of the board's work in *Literaturnaia gazeta,* a newspaper boasting the most educated reading audience of all Soviet periodicals. The unsigned "man of letters" (*literator*) accused the new magazine of being substandard in the quality of its coverage of new releases and charged the editorial board with inadequately educating its readers on how to properly evaluate a film. He argued: "The magazine that could act as the viewer's wise counselor . . . confuses the reader at best, and misinforms him at worst." The unidentified columnist added that, even if the magazine had decided to forsake its responsibility to enlighten its readers, it should, at the very least, advertise films responsibly: "It is awful

[38] "Kino i sovremennost'," *Sovetskii ekran* 3 (1960): 5.

[39] E. Smirnova, "K voprosu o kinokritike," *Sovetskii ekran* 18 (1960): 1.

when poor taste and an "anything goes" attitude is being popularized by a magazine boasting 200,000 subscribers." [40]

Within three weeks, the SE editorial board, incensed by what it perceived to be an inaccurate evaluation of its efforts, wrote to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, E. A. Furtseva, arguing that the critique was grossly unfair. The editor of SE, N. A. Kastelin, complained to Ekaterina Alekseevna: "Our staff members were disoriented after reading this article and wondered if we should reform the magazine to include primarily reviews, critiques, and op-ed pieces. But it was clear to me that this change would contradict the mission the Central Committee outlined for this publication."[41] Kastelin went on to show how the primarily commercial character was a hit with readers. The editor insisted that the magazine's enormous popularity alone proved that SE is on the right track. Kastelin assured Furtseva that each week "thousands of letters" reach SE offices, all with the same appeal: "Why can't I subscribe to this magazine?" The editor insisted that black-marketers in Tbilisi, Tashkent, and Moscow had already begun to speculate in this coveted product since SE was a subscription-only publication. Not shy to blow his own horn, Kastelin boasted that, if a million copies of SE were printed, all of them would sell out instantaneously.

In addition to his own letter, Kastelin included missives that the SE readers wrote in response to the reproving article, implying that the case should, at least partially, be decided by taking account of the enormous popularity the trendy magazine enjoyed. All the letters included at least a line about how difficult it is to get one's hand on a copy of SE. A Moscow librarian, A. K. Gordeeva, noted that patrons ordered a copy as soon as the library opened:

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[40] Anonymous, "Radi reklamy," *Literaturnaia gazeta*, January 9, 1958, 2.

[41] RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 78, l. 8.

"Literally hundreds of people peruse each issue with a sense of satisfaction and appreciation."[42] In addition to berating the "literator" for not recognizing the popularity of the magazine as a clear indication of its authority among "the masses," the letter writers also objected to the fact that the critic devalued the principle of personal choice and insulted their aesthetic discernment. SE reader E. S. Pavlovskii implored: "Comrade critics! Let us have at least one magazine in which we can read a film synopsis that is free of your opinions. Comrade *literator*, give the viewer at least a little bit of independence to decide what movie to see; he is not as clueless as you think."[43]Another subscriber angrily charged the critic with being detached from the people (*otorvan ot naroda*): "Comrade Khrushchev was correct in stating that some members of the artistic intelligentsia are detached from the people. How else could you explain your stupid and pointless statements?"[44]An auto worker in Moscow argued that the *Literaturnaia gazeta* critic's condemnation of SE is misplaced: "If SE staff begins warning me which films to avoid, I can only ask the Ministry of Culture: Why are you releasing these low-quality films?"[45]

The critique from the newspaper that represented the voice of the country's reformist intelligentsia did not change the magazine's mission substantially even though SE began featuring more professional reviews and party decrees after Khrushchev took a firmer line against the reformist intellectuals following the infamous 1962 exhibition of abstract art in the Moscow Manege. Despite the inclusion of more ideologically appropriate material, SE's popularity shielded it from too much outside interference. Serious deliberations about the

[42] Ibid., 29.

[43] Ibid., 27.

[44] Ibid., 22.

[45] Ibid., 24.

magazine's (ideological and pedagogical) mission, however, continued, intermittently, into the 1960s. In 1966, for instance, the representatives of the Cinematographers' Union and the SE editorial board met to discuss the state of the periodical. SE editor, D. S. Pisarevskii, who was a decisive force in making SE the hit that it was, expressed his vision: "In actively educating the viewer, we need to be more attentive to the viewers' opinions and the movie market (*kinorynok*) so the magazine acts not only as the viewers' teacher but also as their sounding board."[46] He explained that SE based its work on the hundred or more letters coming to the offices daily. He argued that the tone of the conversations and articles on various aesthetic topics needed to be free of didacticism and finger-pointing.[47] And, while he acknowledged that film reviews should be supervised more thoroughly, he defended himself by saying that SE writers cannot possibly preempt the criticism various groups level at a film after its release.

Those assembled were divided on the character and future direction of the magazine. Filmmaker S. A. Gerasimov, for instance, commented: "As an avid reader of all sorts of materials, I despise any sort of pompous didacticism. Nonetheless, it is essential that the reader be educated in the appropriate spirit." Another participant shared the mistrust of viewers' aesthetic refinement by calling some of the readers "complete idiots" (*kruglye duraki*), basing his judgment on the criticisms readers leveled at leading film critics, such as S. Rassadin and Ia. Varshavskii. Others present, however, argued that SE's popularity and unique approach to propagandizing Soviet cinema made the magazine indispensable. *The Cranes are Flying* director, M. K. Kalatozov, related how, on a recent visit to a Moscow kolkhoz, he visited four families and noticed movie stars' cut-out photographs from SE in all

[46] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 44, l. 13.

[47] Ibid., l. 15.

four homes. He concluded that SE has "outgrown a purely cinematographic function and has become a means of aesthetically educating our citizens."[48] Others went even further, maintaining that SE should look at similar Polish publications, arguing that those magazines are more oriented toward the needs of its audience. G. D. Roshal', a veteran of the industry, who described the Polish periodicals as "all flashiness and no substance," explained their popularity in the Soviet Union by noting their content was sensationalistic rather than objective.[49] Film critic Iu. M. Khaniutin noted that sensationalism need not be avoided: "We wonder why Polish film magazines have a readership reaching several hundred thousand readers in our own country. . . . Despite their many omissions, they successfully fulfill the populace's desire for fresh information strategically, poignantly, and in a timely fashion—qualities our publications seriously lack." He underscored his point by calling attention to the fact that the average age of the editorial board members is fifty-one, and this struck him as strange considering that the great majority of its readers were between eighteen and twenty years of age.[50]

The competing visions for SE were a symptom of a larger question of cultural and aesthetic authority. Readers saw the journal as their own and resisted the critics' attempts to speak on their behalf, often warning them they ought to qualify their position as a personal one. Consequently, during the first half of the 1960s debates between "cultural authorities" and the readership on the quality and merit of specific motion pictures filled the pages of SE. Professional reviewers felt it their occupational and political duty to provide the readership with the necessary corrective about productions they considered to be of dubious artistic

[48] Ibid., l. 54.

[49] Ibid., l. 64.

[50] Ibid., l. 69.

quality. The sometimes acrimonious exchange of views lasted between 1960 and 1965, at which point different commentators tried breaking the stalemate. Increasingly, the sociological perspective, which argued that the "mass viewer" does not exist, gained traction in the movie industry. The sociologists suggested that film professionals think of audiences as consisting of multiple (and sometimes overlapping) groups, whose reception and attitude toward films depends on both their identity (such as age, sex, educational level, and occupation) and objective factors (such as proximity to the movie theater, TV ownership, and repertoire variety). As this perspective gained ground in the mid-1960s, professional critics infrequently provided a disclaimer that their opinion is not necessarily representative. While critics did not cease to urge their readers to evaluate films in a more systematic, analytical way, they had to concede that their perspective cannot have universal application.

The drawn-out exchange between critics and SE readers began in earnest in 1962, when art critic and essayist S. B. Rassadin unwisely criticized what was to become one of the most popular movies in Soviet history. Rassadin judged *Amphibian Man*, which sold approximately sixty-five million tickets in 1962, to be "filled with elementary blunders and the most unimaginative corniness."[51] The critic disparagingly compared the movie to pop songs (*estradnye pesenki*), arguing that the cheap sentimentality of both genres sedated the average person and blinded them to the genre's obvious inadequacies. Rassadin argued that the trials of lovers and the struggle between good and evil characters are so captivating and entertaining to watch that viewers often miss the fact that typecasting and overused clichés abound. Several months after the article appeared, Rassadin had to address the many letters of complaint he received from angry readers. He cited a couple of angry missives that resented his arrogance: "Who permitted Stanislav Rassadin to express his opinion in a

[51] S. B. Rassadin, "Krasota ili krasivost'?" *Sovetskii ekran* 5 (1962): 7.

journal read by thousands of other citizens?" and "The most aggravating thing is that Comrade Rassadin's opinion is based on a personal impression, which is served up as a condescending perspective."[52]

This attack was not only a strike against Rassadin, but represented a larger push against the type of commentary that had crept into SE at the end of the 1950s. In a number of articles, usually located under a rubric "conversations with the readers" (*beseda s chitateliami*), esteemed film scholars would use portions of reader letters to teach SE readers how to appreciate high art and avoid displaying poor taste and judgment by expressing approval of light entertainment. Film critic G. Kapralov, for instance, phrased his review of the year's most popular musical comedy in the following way: "A person with developed aesthetic sensibilities cannot feel anything else except irritation and regret for having wasted precious time."[53] The fact that the movie sold approximately thirty-seven million tickets seemed not to impress Kapralov; the only thing that mattered to him was the abundance of bad taste and vulgarity (*poshlost'*), which he interpreted as the filmmaker's inability to meaningfully analyze and poetically express contemporary social processes. Almost naively, the critic noted: "If it were not for the young, pretty actress, catchy music, and lively dancing, the worthlessness of the film would be automatically evident."[54] In a separate article, Ia. Varshavskii responded to a letter in which a SE subscriber, N. V. Krasnoshapka, complained about the lack of optimism in some of the most recent Soviet productions, such as M. Romm's *Nine Days of a Year*. Nina Vladimirovna writes that the movie would be much more effective had it ended happily, if perhaps the narrative had not concluded right before

[52] S. B. Rassadin, "Stoit li 'perezhivat'?," *Sovetskii ekran* 12 (1962): 13.

[53] G. Kapralov, "O durnom vkuse i vysokom iskusstve," *Sovetskii ekran* 23 (1960): 7.

[54] Ibid., 6.

Gusev's life-threatening surgery but instead showed Gusev alive and well in his lab. Nina asks: "Why not let the viewer rejoice at the successes of Soviet science?" Varshavskii painstakingly explains to the wayward Nina that depicting real conditions is much better than laboring under harmful illusions, which he links directly to the cult of personality. "If you thought about it a bit harder, you would notice that your well-intentioned suggestion represents the crux of an entire aesthetics in which reality and art are disconnected. This aesthetic—the product of the personality cult—demanded that the moviegoer trust the screen more than his own observations."[55] Thus professional reviewers who supported reformist directors and their auteur slant found comedies, schmaltzy melodramas, musicals, and syrupy romances to be a simultaneous expression of middlebrow aesthetics and an essential part of the Stalinist repressive regime. A large portion of viewers, however, saw film as a way to relax and unwind; the politics of art and ideology were far from their minds.

The incident that proved decisive in resolving the dispute in favor of viewer autonomy occurred in January 1964, when actor M. Kuznetsov wrote a critique of the super popular two-part 1960 Indian melodrama *Love in Simla* (Liubov' v Simle). The protagonist, Sonia, is a modern-day Cinderella, whose spirit and beauty capture the attention of a wealthy young bachelor, who promises to help her escape her hard life in her uncle's household by marrying her. Addressing two fans of the movie, Stella and Laura, Kuznetsov wondered how they can like a movie that propagates shallow, bourgeois morals. He quotes the grandmother advising Sonia as proof of the production's sordidness: "A woman with a fashionable hairdo will turn any man's head. Even if she's empty-headed, he will be on fire and think, 'There's something about this girl.'"[56] The reviewer is particularly annoyed that the film does little

[55] Ia. Varshavskii, "Kak rozhdaetsia radost'?" *Sovetskii ekran* 16 (1962): 17.

more than follow two bored, idle girls as they hunt for a husband. Kuznetsov even curtly describes the songs, so beloved by Soviet fans, as "the Twist with a veneer of Indian folksiness." He encourages Laura and Stella to be more cautious about mistaking true art with a cheap imitation.[57]

Although the letters of protest came flooding immediately, SE did not publish them until December 1964. According to the editorial board, Kuznetsov's evaluation received many negative responses. The published ones attacked the role of the critic, arguing that the professional reviewer ought to reproduce, rather than contest, popular opinion: "Your job is to reflect the audience's point of view like a mirror, rather than put words into our mouths." A retiree, Z. German, similarly admonished: "The true critic is the average viewer (*srednii zritel'*) and it is his voice that should be heeded." A Moscow reader, K. Babiniuk, blamed professional critics for sapping the joy out of moviegoing: "I don't understand why critics get a kick out of finding faults with films. A critic is supposed to be objective and be aware of the fact that many average viewers who read his article do not need to be told why they should not like the film."[58] While critics, such as Rassadin, Varshavskii, and Kuznetsov acknowledged all genres as appropriate as long as they express a clear-cut artistic and ideological position, readers demanded that scholars should not reprimand them for indulging in films for entertainment's sake.

The SE editorial board did not respond directly or comment on the complaints. Instead, SE asked readers to mail responses about their views on the role of professional

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[56] M. Kuznetsov, "Chto zhe vam nravitsia, Stella i Laura?," *Sovetskii ekran* 2 (1964): 18.

[57] Ibid., 19

[58] "Dlia kogo i dlia chego sushchestvuet kinokritika: Prava i obiazannosti retsenzenta," *Sovetskii ekran* 24 (1964): 14.

criticism. In April 1965 the magazine published a collection of representative reactions, which were equally divided for and against the critic's didactic tone. Some repeated the criticism from the previous issue: "Kuznetsov should be banned from writing reviews. . . . My opinion will always be based on my own impressions, regardless of how much SE reviewers drone on about which movie is good and which is bad." Contrastingly, other readers insisted that lowbrow tastes predominated and that the critics had a vital educational role to play. One reader stated that some of his compatriots require more education since they thronged to see Pietro Germi's 1961 comedy *Divorce, Italian Style* (Divorzio All'italiana) more because of the lead actress's (Stefania Sandrelli) curvaceous figure than for the lead actor's (Marcello Mastroianni) comedic skills.[59] While a certain segment of subscribers agreed that aesthetics trumped entertainment value, the tide slowly turned in the opposite direction—domestically as well as internationally.

By the mid 1960s, the debate over the sociopolitical role of film and the dynamics behind moviegoing preoccupied the movie industry worldwide and spilled from the pages of SE onto the (inter)national stage. The plenary session of the IV International Moscow Film Festival in 1965, entitled "Cinema and the Viewer," addressed the problem of attracting larger audiences to "serious works of art." Movie industries around the world faced a similar problem: escapist cinematography jeopardized the livelihood of "smart" films. Although the conference participants spoke to the same issue, the proposed solutions differed greatly. Some, such as Soviet director M. Romm, argued that it was more important to create a film that would endure the test of time than enjoy immediate, mass success. In response to this lofty ideal, pragmatists, such as the renowned Italian filmmaker, Giuseppe De Santis, insisted that the filmmakers' first obligation is to respond to the day's most immediate issues. Polish

[59] "Kritika i zritel'," *Sovetskii ekran* 7 (1965): 7.

director Jerzy Gofman echoed this sentiment, suggesting that the best way to reach a mass audience is to simultaneously entertain and stimulate intellectually; to him the two goals were not mutually exclusive.

As national movie industries across the globe faced Hollywood's dominance, filmmakers everywhere became aware that they had to fight harder to attract viewers and sustain the local movie industry. This predicament forced filmmakers to pay closer attention to what strategies would fill the empty cinema seats; the moviegoer had become king and, as a result, national cinemas began mimicking Hollywood. Even in the USSR, the movie industry began approaching the viewer both as a consumer and as an ideological subject; by the mid-1960s movies had to instill socialist values and simultaneously achieve record ticket sales. In a 1964 issue of *Iskusstvo kino*, art critic N. Lebedev wrote: "Films are made to be watched. From an economic standpoint, film is a product and the moviegoer is a consumer (*potrebitel'*)." Quoting Marx, Lebedev asserted that production that does not reach the consumer is no production at all: "Without production there cannot be consumption. By the same token, there can be no talk of real production if there is no consumption."[60] Another film critic, V. Orlov, also noted: "We should not forget one simple truth: a moviegoer is a consumer. Yes, indeed, he is a consumer, or, if you wish, a customer (*pokupatel'*)."[61]Although Orlov saw escapist productions as toxic, he felt that the problem was as much about economics as it was about (socialist) aesthetics/morality. He cautioned that the consumer had the right to have his way (*Pokupatel' imeet pravo trebovat'*) since the millions of tickets moviegoers buy finance the multi-million ruble movie industry. Orlov concluded that the main problem in the past was that critics asked audiences what they

[60] N. Lebedev, "Fil'm i zritel'," *Iskusstvo kino* 6 (1964): 43.

[61] V. Orlov, "Iskusstvo nuzhno raznoe!," *Sovetskii ekran* 8 (1966): 19.

expected from their moviegoing experience only rhetorically. The time had come for critics to replace the imaginary viewer with a real one.

Prompted by Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin's economic reform agenda, even official policy supported this type of thinking after Khrushchev's ouster in 1964. In September 1965, the party leadership approved a general economic reform program that aimed to ensure a greater freedom for individual enterprises from central controls and sought to turn the enterprises' economic objectives toward making a sales profit. The crux of the reform lay in substituting gross-production goals with profitability as the main indicator of an enterprise's productivity, thus making the industry more consumer-oriented and consumer-friendly.[62] Mirroring the agenda set for industrial enterprises, national studios also commenced discussions about establishing a system based on profitability. In 1965 a group consisting of economists, artists, sociologists, psychologists, and party officials founded an experimental studio whose work based itself entirely on financial self-sustainability. The Mosfil'm studio was intended to be a sort of micro-lab experiment, the results of which would eventually be applied to the entire movie industry. Director G. Chukhrai, the studio's founder and artistic director, noted that the existing system rewarded only projects that did not use up all the allotted resources and finished before the deadline. In other words, there was little incentive for filmmakers to shoot films that would guarantee success with audiences and ensure high ticket sales. This bureaucratic approach resulted in films of poor quality that made little money. He concluded that the new experimental studio would redress

[62] For a detailed analysis of Prime Minister A. N. Kosygin's reforms see P. R. Gregory and R.C. Stuart, *Russian and Soviet Economic Performance and Structure* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1988) and Alec Nove, *The Soviet Economic System* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

this deficiency by placing as much attention on the "economics of consumption" as on "the economics of production."[63]

The organizational logic underpinning the experimental studio bore an uncanny resemblance to fundamental market-driven logic. At first, the state would fund the first couple of studio productions but the studio was obliged to repay the low-interest loan within two years. After the initial government-sponsored advance, the studio's existence depended exclusively on its ability to turn a profit. If the studio did not produce films that sold more than eleven million tickets, i.e. features that would pay for themselves, it would not have sufficient funds to produce more movies. The studio's manager, V. Pozner, noted that management positions were also directly dependent on the fullness of the studio's coffers. If the movie made a significant profit, the film crew would also receive bonuses based on the number of tickets sold. In other words, after the costs of production were covered, the crew would receive an extra four rubles for every thousand tickets sold.

In the ten years of its existence, the experimental studio proved extremely successful and lucrative. Having produced some of the period's greatest blockbusters, such as L. Gaidai's 1971 *Twelve Chairs* (Dvenadtsat stul'ev) and his 1973 *Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Professions* (Ivan Vasil'evich meniaet professiiu), Chukhrai's studio became a role model for keeping down production costs, shortening the filming period, and attracting tens of millions of viewers to its feature productions. In fact, the studio boasted a surplus of 2.5 million rubles when the Mosfil'm leadership shut down the experiment in 1976. In his memoirs Chukhrai blames the Mosfil'm bureaucrats and party officials not only for terminating the Soviet Union's short flirtation with market principles but also for neglecting to institute the studio's

[63] A. Klebanskaia, "Eksperiment vedet v budushchee," *Sovetskii ekran* 3 (1966): 1

most successful practices nationally.[64] The mid-level officials feared the application of Chukhrai's commercial principles would allow the movie industry to wean itself off state funding and become a semi-autonomous entity. Moreover, a substantial number of mediocre directors and scriptwriters felt threatened by the market-like competitiveness implicit in Chukhrai's methods and heartily supported the campaign to close the experimental studio.

Despite the short-lived success of the market principles in the movie industry, the cache these ideas carried in the second part of the 1960s negatively impacted the cultural capital and official standing of films that focused more on educating than entertaining. Both socialist realist "masterpieces" and films mimicking contemporary West European cinematographic aesthetics had trouble negotiating the industry's new-found interest in satisfying the customer. Backed by the consumerist logic that reigned in the second part of the 1960s, celluloid masculinity could, in part, exist as a purely sensory experience, lacking any substantive edifying function. A product of Khrushchev's populist policies, the voice of the people, evident in the astronomical attendance rates for foreign feature productions and passionate letters sent to SE, secured an air of legitimacy for the dreamy, virile heroes whose appearance and conduct had little in common with socialist realist doctrine. While the guardians of good taste and socialist ethos continued to insist that audiences should strive to recognize the value of "everyday Soviet heroes," some of them grudgingly acknowledged that even the ideologically shallow heroes—such as the American cowboys in *The Magnificent Seven* or the French guards in *The Three Musketeers*—could be allowed to entertain for entertainment's sake—as long as, as art critic Rassadin put it, "Alexandre Dumas does not eclipse Tolstoi." As a result, Soviet celluloid masculinity became tiered

[64] Chukhrai describes this fascinating episode in the history of Soviet film production in a memoir detailing his professional life. See G. Chukhrai, *Moe kino* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2002), 165-88.

between heroes whose function was to entertain and those who actively assisted in the making of the post-Stalinist New Soviet Man.

From Average Moviegoer to Differentiated Consumer

The movie industry's efforts to reconceptualize its relationship with the viewer resulted in the promotion of sociological research aimed at understanding "consumer behavior." Soviet sociological studies, founded as they were on a rational and scientific approach to film distribution and propaganda, were intended to reduce the vagueness and subjectivity that mired debates on the nature of moviegoing up to that point. Scriptwriter Khersonskii observed that individuals who spoke their mind about films or moviegoing practices often "channeled" the opinions and feelings of "the people," claiming to speak on their behalf. Insisting that no one can generalize about the opinions of millions of moviegoers, Khersonskii suggested a "cardiogram of the movie hall," i.e. some kind of strategy that would help in determining the factors that affect audience reception.[65]

In an effort to produce films that could be both profitable and ideologically sound, the Soviet movie industry increasingly turned to sociological research to determine how audiences chose films and how they reacted to them. From the mid-1960s, commentators did not simultaneously berate and enlighten the viewer but rather devised strategies that would draw moviegoers to the "right kinds of movies." Sociological research of moviegoing patterns analyzed both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the viewing experience; although empiricists at heart, Soviet sociologists wanted to understand the psychological dynamics behind the numbers. The resurrection of sociological discipline not only

[65] Between 1928 and 1932 a small number of sociological studies were conducted to determine the populace's attitudes toward films, moviegoing, and the movie experience in general. For an overview of the surveys conducted during this period see L. N. Kogan, *Kino i zritel': Opyt sotsiologicheskogo issledovaniia* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1968), 14-22.

religitimized a profession that had been defunct since the 1930s but also called for thinking about Soviet reality in a new way. Reflecting on the renaissance of Soviet sociology in the 1950s and 1960, sociologist G. S Batygin concluded: "By reinterpreting society, sociologists reformed the contents of Marxist social doctrine as well as the style and language of science, creating new social symbols and standards."[66] The impact of sociological research on the movie industry was no less profound than it was on the perception of Soviet society overall.

From 1956 until 1972, Soviet sociology both established institutional recognition for itself and represented the opinions of a population that had hitherto had limited ways of expressing its sentiments. From the mid-to-late 1960s, a number of sociological studies revealed that socioeconomic disparity, lack of social mobility, gender inequalities, youth delinquency, and a low morale among industrial workers plagued Soviet society.[67] In other words, "sociological findings began to contradict the positions of Marxist ideology."[68] Even though much of the work sociologists carried out sought to assist the authorities in battling with social ills, those in charge became increasingly uneasy about results demonstrating that official platitudes about social realities rarely coincided with conditions on the ground.

Research for a full-length monograph that addressed the sociology behind moviegoing and the movie experience commenced in 1963, led by one of the country's first sociologist of culture, Lev Naumovich Kogan. The research, conducted in the Sverdlovsk

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[66] G. S. Batygin, *Rossiiskaia sotsiologiia shestidesiatykh godov v vospominaniiakh i dokumentakh* (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 1999), 13.

[67] See A. A. Magdiev, "Klassovye razlichiia i material'naia basa ikh sokhraneniia na sovremennom etape," in *Sotsiologicheskii sbornik*, ed. G. G. Osmanov (Makhachkala: Dagestanskii filial AN SSSR, 1970), 86-102; V. N. Shubkin, "Molodezh' vstupaet v zhizn'," *Voprosy filosofii* 5 (1965):57-70; V. I. Mishin, I. E. Rubtsov, and A. A. Terentev, "Problema sotsial'nogo sostava sovremennogo studenchestva," in *Sotsiologiia i vysshaia shkola*, ed. B. I. Zelenkov (Gorkii: Gor'kovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet im. N. I. Lobachevskogo, 1970), 7-19.

[68] Dmitri N. Shalin, "The Development of Soviet Sociology, 1956-1976," *Annual Review of Sociology* 4 (1978): 187.

region in the Urals, took four years to complete and was, according to Kogan, a response to two related assumptions about cultural sociology. First, Kogan felt that the sociological research on moviegoing had, up to that point, been plagued by methodological infelicities, resulting in dubious conclusions and ineffective policy recommendations. Second, Kogan also fought against the widespread viewpoint that empirical research was still ill-equipped to add to the theoretical studies on popular taste. Thus his work represented not only a regional case study of local moviegoing trends, but also validated approaching the question of audience reception with a sociological framework and perspective. Kogan argued for his methodology in no uncertain terms: "The value of theoretical discussions diminishes manifold if it is based on a priori assumptions instead of studies of concrete, lived experiences."[69]

Kogan and his colleagues formulated four main goals for their ambitious project: to determine the levels of interest in cinema of various demographic groups; to elucidate factors influencing moviegoers to choose one movie over another; to ascertain how certain films become blockbusters; and to understand what role film protagonists play in attracting moviegoers to films. To achieve representativeness, the research team resorted to random, systematic, and stratified sampling and used both written surveys and oral interviews. Equally as important is the fact that, in trying to achieve representativeness, Kogan and his coworkers divided social groups (blue-collar workers, peasants, the intelligentsia, students, white-collar workers, pensioners, and stay-at-home moms) according to age and education, i.e. they contended that there existed significant variation within social groups that required careful consideration if their results were to adequately reflect the diversity of Soviet audiences. In other words, Kogan's study conceptualized the viewer as being motivated by

[69] Kogan, *Kino i zritel'*, 29.

multiple factors simultaneously; the moviegoers' identity (age, gender, education, and social class) as well as external factors (distance to movie theater, the comfort of the movie theater, the diversity of film offerings, TV ownership) were all taken into account. This approach allowed Kogan to advance the notion that the "average viewer" (*srednii zritel'*) does not exist in practice and that each genre, each film, has a target viewer and target audience (*kazhdaia gruppa fil'mov imeet "svoego" zritelia, "svoiu" auditoriu*).[70] By differentiating the social groups and advocating for multiple interest groups, Kogan legitimated the multi-functionality of both films and celluloid masculinity. If each film had its target audience, then, by extension, each hero also had his target group.

Kogan's research highlighted the seemingly endless variety of factors that shaped the Soviet citizens' moviegoing experience and determined how they would judge a film. For instance, results demonstrated that, although the majority of those surveyed chose films randomly rather than intentionally, the respondents' motivation to go to the movies depended, more often than not, on their educational levels. Generally, the higher their educational level, the more selective and thoughtful their rationale for visiting the movie theater in the first place.[71] Not only were the individuals' visits to the screen motivated more by chance than a clearly defined reasoning, but different demographic groups held different expectations for what they wanted to see. Kogan's study showed the disparate demands the sexes and age groups had for cinematic themes and genres.[72] While men preferred science fiction and suspense thrillers, women were drawn to musicals and fairytales. Both sexes, however, preferred comedy best of all and expressed the desire to see more comedies on

[70] Ibid., 34.

[71] Ibid., 111-14.

[72] Ibid., 129-51.

Soviet screens. Whereas the gender discrepancy was unsurprising, the revelations about generational patterns were much more revealing and worrisome—especially since they flew in the face of official rhetoric on youth. Only 5 percent of 16-25 year-olds expressed interest in seeing films about the Civil War and only 10 percent wanted to see more films about the Second World War. The youth was much more interested in movies about contemporaneity (34 percent) and love (26 percent).[73] Moreover, compared to other age groups, the 16-25 year-olds paid the least attention to movies about rural life.

The diversity and discrepancy in audience preferences led the researchers to conclude that the movie industry should produce and distribute films with specific audience contingents in mind, going so far as to suggest that the industry would be much more effective in promoting their motion pictures if it could predict which geographic districts and demographic groups would most likely secure a film's (financial) success. Although Kogan and his team recognized that some heroes and films garner an enormous following despite demographic or locational particularities, they argued the exceptionality of such productions necessitates a more pragmatic approach to the great majority of motion pictures. Radical in the Soviet context, this proposal essentially advised a market approach to moviemaking. Like Lebedev, he accentuated the pointlessness of production unless the target group "consumes" the product.

The variety the study identified in terms of why audiences went to the movies and what genres/topic they preferred was equally obvious in the respondents' attitudes toward celluloid heroism. Kogan's conclusion promoted the kind of politics toward film heroes evident in SE debates between critics and viewers: there can be no talk of a foolproof formula for creating a universal hero. He noted: "The analysis of the statistics once again

[73] Ibid., 134.

demonstrates that a formula for creating a positive hero does not exist and cannot exist. Heroes are as varied as are our lives."[74]At the beginning of the chapter on celluloid masculinity, Kogan pronounced the "problem of the movie hero" to be most important in considering the interrelationship between the screen and the viewer."[75] The issue of cinematic heroism was important to the research since sociologists posited that the protagonists relayed social, moral, behavioral, and aesthetic norms and ideals.

Unlike previous surveys, which limited themselves to asking respondents which hero was their favorite, Kogan's study took pains to examine how and why audiences related to some heroes but rejected others. In an effort to understand the psychological aspect of identifying and connecting with movie heroes, Kogan devised two sets of survey questions.[76] One set of survey questions was geared to understanding the kind of relationship viewers had with movie heroes and another set sought to identify how audiences responded to particular types of heroes. The first set of questions asked respondents to state whether they put themselves in the hero's shoes during a viewing, if they emulated their favorite hero, and whether their favorite heroes had, at any point, helped them to change, make a decision, or look at life differently. The second cluster of questions gauged the type(s) of heroes viewers preferred: ideal heroes, ordinary heroes, heroes in the vein of musketeers/cowboys, or all three types of heroes equally. Respondents were also asked to state if they preferred foreign protagonists over Soviet heroes or if they regarded them equally.

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[74] Ibid., 261.

[75] Ibid., 241.

[76] Art scholar and critic Lev Roshal' also advocated for studies geared to finding out not just what demographic groups go to the movie theater, but also why they choose certain movies over others. See Lev Roshal', "Kinozritel'—kakov on?," *Sovetskii ekran* 23 (1967): 20.

Although the responses to these questions are valuable, the questions themselves are even more revealing in that they expose the researchers' assumption about masculinity.[77] First, heroism is phrased in exclusively masculine terms. All the examples pollsters provide and report revolve around male protagonists. Second, researchers assumed that viewer response to celluloid masculinity was a reflection of their age or educational level rather than evidence of a particular hero's impact. In other words, the architects of the survey thought of screened masculinity as working according to a certain set of invisible rules; i.e. that there was a logic to how viewers—based on their identity—deconstructed and experienced the heroes they watched. Third, the fact that the survey offered three types of heroes—ideal, ordinary, and musketeer-like/cowboy-like—demonstrates the conviction that positive heroes could be defined by multiple characteristics. To prove their point, Kogan's team discussed the fact that, in 1965, G. Kozintsev's Hamlet appealed to the Soviet moviegoers as much as A. Saltikov's rough and gruff kolkhoz chairman E. Trubnikov. On the face of it, the reflective Danish prince has little in common with a volatile Second World War veteran who restores a kolkhoz in the immediate postwar period through merciless but effective tactics. Nonetheless, Kogan poetically hypothesizes that Hamlet's and Trubnikov's popularity lies in the force and harmony of their thoughts and actions.

The last two assumptions about celluloid masculinity are particularly significant as they undercut the socialist realist model of the ideal hero as it was practiced during Stalinism. Instead of a complex but uniform set of signs and symbols that defined the hero and in lieu of extremely limited range of plots, masculinity could now be expressed in a number of ways

[77] The data revealed that the 16-25 year-olds were most likely of all age groups to put themselves in the hero's shoes and that 80 percent of this demographic contingent strove to emulate their favorite heroes. Nonetheless, the survey results also demonstrated that the movie heroes had a mediated influence on the majority of the moviegoers' thoughts and actions.

since sociologists assumed that different audience contingents reacted differently to specific types of masculine heroes. The movie hero's effect was therefore constrained and enabled by the viewers' identity; it was only heroes with a certain *je ne se quoi* that could reach the widest selection of moviegoers.

As with Chukhrai's experimental studio, Kogan's research proved valuable but remained underutilized. By 1971 sociology's "golden age" had passed and only conservative research that supported the party's narrow agenda received funding. Because the research published in the late 1960s showed an increasing disparity between official propaganda and social realities, the Communist Party argued that the empirical findings Soviet sociologists obtained had dubious scientific value. As sociologists continued to expose the gap between Marxist theory and Soviet realities, the authorities only approved research that would unequivocally reflect the superiority of the socialist system. Moreover, instituting Kogan's findings, like the business practices Chukhrai suggested, would have required a substantive reorganization/commercialization of the movie industry, the distribution administration, and local movie theater operations. Kogan's conclusions about targeting films to particular audiences, however, became an accepted theorem in professional discourse. During the period of "developed socialism" (1965-1985) movie industry professionals continued to refine his central premise that each film has its own target audience and that moviegoers respond to films based on their age, education level, and occupation. Kogan's "invention" of differentiated audiences had most profoundly affected notions of how celluloid masculinity functions; the idea that filmmakers could replicate, for instance, Chapaev's singular popularity and fame slowly dissipated. Chapaev and other, equally famous, heroes were seen

as discrete episodes, products of a particular time and place, rather than universal formulas for constructing an ideal masculinity for the mythical "average viewer."

Conclusion

During the 1965 Moscow Film Festival, Giuseppe De Santis declared that "cinema *is* the viewer (*zritel'*)." The famous neorealist director made this claim at a public seminar "Cinema and the viewer."[78] The idea that the moviegoer is at the center of the cinematic experience reached wide currency by the mid-1960s—a result of the Khrushchev-era populist rhetoric and the rise of sociological research of moviegoers' consumer behavior. For the first time in the Soviet context, the statistical, concrete viewer became a key factor in determining the value of a film. This is not to say that Stalinist films were not viewer-centered. Quite the contrary. The attention Stalin himself lavished on films and the popularity of Stalinist productions demonstrate that officials practiced A.V. Luncharskii's golden rule for effective propaganda: "Boring agitation is counter-agitation." Discursively, however, actual audience interests and preferences played a marginal role in deciding the fate of a film; cinema propagandized the official line to the undifferentiated millions through entertainment. The Stalinist authorities utilized cinema to rally popular opinion around economic plans or political *causes célèbre*s and, accordingly, directors worried more about the reviews in *Pravda* than about popular reception.

SE's commitment to publishing readers' letters and advocating on the subscribers' behalf justified and propelled sociological inquiries into moviegoing attendance and audience reception. As sociological research grappled to determine the logic behind audience behavior, the mythical "average viewer" was replaced by the notion of differentiated moviegoing groups. Consequently,

[78] Kogan, *Kino i zritel'*, 5.

by the mid-to-late 1960s the movie industry made active attempts to understand the specific needs of particular audiences. This shift in perspective is perhaps best illustrated in the fact that, by 1964, a noted film critic began referring to moviegoers as consumers and customers. As a result, Thaw-era political and artistic elites' judgments of archetypal masculinity were as dependent on box office profits as they were on the official point of view.

If a film failed to attract an audience, the fault lay with those in charge of the movie industry who were out of touch with popular tastes. In the words of L. N. Kogan: "We cannot fashion the New Soviet Man or influence his aesthetic development without accounting for the social, generational, and many other differentials of every population stratum."[79] As cinema became increasingly viewer-centered and as sociologists approached the problem of consumption in more sophisticated ways, the very idea of what role socialist culture ought to play in the lives of Soviet citizens became open for negotiation. As Joshua First's research on the "differentiated" viewer shows "the sociological approach to understanding the relationship between text and spectator transformed both the aesthetics of Soviet cinema and what media consumers came to expect when going to the movies."[80]

This shift enabled slapstick comedians to rival their intellectual counterparts and in many ways stymied the reformist directors' chances at popularizing their point of view. Iu. V. Nikulin, the comedian who starred in the decade's biggest blockbusters, became a household name partly because of his ability to embody the average Ivan in a light, sympathetic way. More Soviet moviegoers preferred Nikulin's heroes' endearing ordinariness than the cultured, brainy, and aloof protagonists in the vein of nuclear physicist Dima Gusev in *Nine Days of a Year*. Although

[79] Ibid., 10.

[80] Joshua First, "From Spectator to 'Differentiated' Consumer: Film Audience Research in the Era of Developed Socialism (1965–80)," *Kritik*a 9 (2008): 319.

the notable popularity of heroes like Gusev or Hamlet offer an invaluable testimony to the period's *zeitgeist* and illustrate how a proportion of cinematographers shaped the national discourse on de-Stalinization, they also serve as a testimony of the difficulty reformist anti-Stalinist filmmakers faced in their efforts to truly popularize their vision for a post-Stalinist order through "serious" dramas and reflective, self-conscious protagonists

Chapter 6

The Phenomenon of De-heroization: Soviet Masculinity in a Pan-European Perspective

The preceding chapters examined distinctively Soviet phenomena that shaped representations of post-Stalinist masculinity in idiosyncratic ways. A number of political, cultural, and scientific processes unique to the Soviet Union—de-Stalinization, Iurii Gagarin's flight into space, Khrushchev's antireligious campaign, and the official drive to achieve communism by 1980—impressed a specifically Soviet look and feel onto Thaw-era movie heroes. At the same time, throughout the 1950s and 1960s Soviet filmmakers reacted to and reflected sociopolitical trends equally palpable on the other side of the Iron Curtain. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the artistic legacy Soviet and European filmmakers shared in order to identify how the Soviet reformist intelligentsia's representations of masculinity fit in with those appearing in Poland, the U.K., Italy, and Czechoslovakia.[1]

[1] As the previous chapter demonstrates, audiences, directors, and party officials were keenly aware of the world beyond their borders and were well acquainted with foreign films. Indeed, a 1965 Cinematographers' Union report on the association's cooperation with international delegations in 1964 illustrated a vibrant exchange. Over the course of 1964, 236 members of the union went abroad to visit other movie studios, international film festivals, and professional conferences. Significantly, 136 of the total visited capitalist countries while 100 went to socialist countries. During that same year the union welcomed 27 delegates from West Europe, including the U.K. Italy, West Germany, and France. For the full report see RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 142, ll. 96-117. In addition, the country's national repository of domestic and foreign film (*Gosfil'mofond*) enjoyed an active cooperation with similar agencies abroad and consequently offered Soviet directors an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the latest international productions. In many instances, *Gosfil'mofond* ensured that young Thaw directors receive the necessary background in foreign cinematography. Noted Thaw-era director, A. Mitta, recalled: "During the 1950s, when no one could watch any foreign films, *Gosfil'mofond* gave us, the students of the Cinematography Institute, the opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the masterpieces of world cinema." For a more detailed account of *Gosfil'mofond's* activities during the Thaw years see V. S. Malyshev, *Gosfil'mofond: Zemlianichnaia poliana* (Moscow: Pashkov Dom, 2005), 107-52.

The comparison of postwar movements in Soviet and European cinematography reveals two important trends. First, a small but significant number of Soviet reformist directors produced protagonists and constructed narratives akin to those in West and East Europe not because they imitated trends circulating abroad but because they shared a common set of concerns and philosophical values with their European counterparts. In other words, analogous social, economic, and political developments across the continent inspired heroes, narratives, and aesthetics that transcended (and displayed the artificiality of) Cold War borders. Although both Soviet authorities and Western art critics saw the relatively small number of Soviet experimental films as a sign of political dissent and/or kowtowing to foreign fashions, it is more accurate to think of these similarities as proof that Soviet and European artists operated within a larger cultural ecosystem. Reflecting on the intercultural cooperation during the 1960s, Soviet director Marlen Khutsiev observed that: "After my [1967] film *July Rain*, I was accused of imitating Antonioni. But the fact of the matter is that I had not seen Antonioni's films at that point. What I want to say is that at any given point there simply exist certain prevalent historical processes that affect what happens in the film industry."[2]

Moreover, although Soviet critics used the term deheroization (*degeroizatsiia*) to mark any film hero whom they considered inauthentic because of the directors' supposed desire to follow "Western fads," the label says more about official anxieties than about the directors' (in)ability to reflect on the state of Soviet masculinity.[3] Detractors of the reformist

[2] From a transcript of a roundtable discussion entitled "Nikto bol'she ne sdelaet ni *Pepel i almaz* ni *Tishinu i krik*: Kinematograf Vostochnoi Evropy—proshchanie s proshlym," *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 71 (2005): 43.

[3] The term deheroization first received widespread currency in connection to criticisms of V. A. Nekrasov's first book *In the Trenches of Stalingrad*. Throughout 1946, critics condemned Nekrasov's novel for minimizing the glory of the Red Army and paying too much attention to insignificant psychological details

intelligentsia saw these un-heroic characters as a psychological Cold War tactic, a type of Trojan Horse concealing dangerous and alien ideologies. Soviet art critic V. A. Razumnyi, for instance, noted in 1963 that the phenomenon of deheroization exemplifies just how entrenched reactionary bourgeois art trends had become in the USSR. He warned that aesthetics can under no circumstance be separated from politics since Western postmodern philosophies, with their pessimistic view of human nature, negatively affect the Soviet people's attitudes.[4] An anonymous editorial in *Soviet Screen* more directly blasted filmmakers who aped West European experimental cinema: "There are those directors who are ready to unthinkingly bow down to the voguish idols of western cinema and their modernist currents. These artists among us understand innovation one-dimensionally and betray the glorious traditions of Soviet cinema."[5] Scriptwriter N. Abramov added to the critical chorus by noting that, while abstractionism and surrealism clearly reflect the neuroses and psychoses inherent in capitalist societies, in the Soviet context postmodern art forms represent an alien and harmful phenomenon.[6] Even the generally moderate chairman of the Cinematographer's Union, Ivan Py'rev, pronounced: "Unlike capitalist artists who fear the end of the world, who speak of a lost generation, and who contemplate the futility of human existence, we, the Soviet artists, have to celebrate life on our planet and uphold humanistic

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because he focused on the daily lives of the rank-and-file soldiers. But because Stalin intervened to award Nekrasov a Stalin Prize for literature in 1947, the term largely fell out of use until the late 1950s. At that point critics again utilized it to criticize novels and motion pictures that presented historic events and contemporaneity in a documentary, unembellished fashion. After the 1960s this term would reappear between 1985 and 1999, when it acquired traction among reactionary and nationalistic forces but was not tied specifically to the film industry and literary production. During and after Gorbachev's reforms conservative and nationalistic factions deployed the term deheroization to refer to a process of demythologization of Russian and Soviet history evident in investigative journalism.

[4] RGALI f. 2936, op. 1, d. 227, l. 18.

[5] Anonymous (editorial) "Slovo partii okryliaet" *Sovetskii ekran* 1 (1963): 1

[6] N. Abramov, "'Eksperimental'noe'? Net, antichelovechnoe!," *Sovetskii ekran* 7 (1963): 18.

life-affirming principles."[7] To take these politically-charged accusations at face value would obscure the fact that "de-heroized" protagonists served as an accurate, if partial, reflection of the reformist intelligentsia's views on contemporary Soviet society and men's roles in it. Thus the allegation of de-heroization as something alien simultaneously tapped into the authorities' Cold War paranoia and ensured that censors repress any depictions of masculinity which, although representative of "life on the ground," contradicted ideological slogans about Soviet life.

However categorical the authorities' objections to un-Soviet and un-heroic protagonists, the appearance of film heroes who did not fit (neatly) into the socialist realist canon was more the result of a pervasive postwar mood than a product of calculated political dissent. During the 1950s and 1960s, societies across the continent faced the combined destabilizing effect of consumerism, a recalcitrant youth (sub)culture, and Cold War anxieties. European intellectuals not only grappled with the effects of postwar economic and sociopolitical transformations but also confronted the memory and moral trauma of World War II. The triumph of racist totalitarian regimes across Europe, the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki compelled artists and thinkers across Europe to contemplate evil as a permanent element of human existence and identify absurdity as the fundamental human condition. Not for nothing did Hannah Arendt's 1945 essay "Nightmare and Flight" accurately predict that "the problem of evil will be the fundamental question of postwar intellectual life in Europe."[8] Although Soviet intellectuals reflected on the widespread complicity and conformity that bred the Stalinist Terror, their

[7] I. A. Pyr'ev, "Po puti, ukazannomu partiei," *Sovetskii ekran* 9 (1963): 1. (A segment from Pyr'ev's address to the IV Plenum of the Cinematographers' Union Steering Committee.)

[8] "Nightmare and Flight," *Partisan Review* 12, no. 2 (1945), reprinted in *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954*, ed. Jerome Kohn (Harcourt Brace, 1994), pp. 133–35.

questions were of the same tenor. For instance, a protagonist in the 1962 film *Nine Days of a Year* in one fell swoop dismissed the notion that humankind is rational, scoffed at the positivist view of history, and rejected the idea that societies are capable of obeying moral codes: "Surely you cannot think that man has become more intelligent in the past 30,000 years? The first man to strike fire was more brilliant than the discoverer of quantum physics. Besides, a Genghis Khan could have never thought to fertilize fields with human ashes, stuff mattresses with human hair, or make lampshades from human skin."

The atrocities that occurred during the 1930s and 1940s generated widespread cynicism about the possibility that any governing system could tame human capacity for evil as some Soviet and European intellectuals became more critical about ideology's ability to give meaning to man's purpose. French playwright Eugene Ionesco's 1958 sentiment fittingly expressed the skepticism prevalent among the postwar intelligentsia: "If there is something that needs to be demystified, it is those ideologies which offer ready-made solutions."[9] Ionesco's statement certainly mirrors the Soviet reformist filmmakers' preference for ambiguous finales as more authentic. This attitude could best be evidenced in 1961, when the nonconformist novelist Viktor Nekrasov applauded M. Khutsiev's *Lenin's Guard* specifically for: "not having dragged into the movie screen a gray-mustached and all-knowing worker who had ready-made answers for everything."[10] Thus both Soviet and European intellectuals, burdened with the great moral tragedies of their time, sought new ways to conceptualize the realities of the human condition.

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[9] Quoted in Raymond F. Betts, *Europe in Retrospect: A Brief History of the Past Two Hundred Years* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1979), 191.

[10] RGANI, f. 5, op. 55, d. 41, l. 77.

Increasingly experimenting with film form, West European directors used motion pictures to express the skepticism, alienation, and ambivalence already dominant in literary and philosophical circles. Consequently, postwar motion pictures across Europe gave life to a masculine archetype that stood in sharp contrast to the ideals of the interwar years. Since the majority of dominant postwar intellectual trends—such as existentialism, surrealism, and absurdism—rejected reason as a source of meaning, masculinity came to be defined through man's dubious search for individual purpose. Like Sisyphus, whom Zeus condemned to forever push a boulder up a mountain only to see it roll down again, existentialists saw revolt against meaninglessness as man's fundamental task. Postmodern celluloid protagonists—particularly in the British New Wave and the works of Italian auteur directors such as M. Antonioni—expressed man's futile search for clarity in the face of a volatile world devoid of God and eternal truths.

Czechoslovak and Polish directors played a particularly important role in promoting more complex heroes living in an ambiguous universe since they creatively combined socialist realist themes and aesthetics with those typical of postmodern cinematography. The so-called Polish Film School during the late 1950s and early 1960s as well as the Czechoslovak New Wave during the mid-to-late 1960s illustrated the possibilities of unique national artistic traditions within the socialist camp and expanded the limits of the permissible in the context of socialist realism. The directors of the Polish Film School successfully developed strategies to problematize the heretofore schematic narratives about World War II and by so doing complicated views about human nature in general and masculinity in particular. By not romanticizing or simplifying war—the ultimate homosocial environment—Polish filmmakers cracked the edifice of the monumental socialist realist hero

and the myth of the indissoluble homosocial fratriarchy. The Czechoslovak New Wave went even further and placed the contemporary socialist citizen in absurd and surreal situations that rendered life in the Eastern Bloc simultaneously humorous and horrifying. Since Czech and Slovak directors mercilessly mocked both their national character and human nature, their heroes epitomized ideological defeatism and de-heroization. It is no surprise that by the time Soviet tanks rolled into Prague in 1968, conservative Soviet filmmakers accused their Czechoslovak counterparts as having actively promoted "unhealthy attitudes" and incited reactionary activities.

Since this chapter examines the breadth rather than depth of intranational similarities and connections, it comprises four sections. Each section places one Soviet motion picture in dialogue with a representative example of the British New Wave, the Czechoslovak New Wave, Italian auteur filmmaking, and the Polish Film School. This approach makes sense in that the number of Soviet films that unambiguously correspond to European experimental cinema in content and spirit is relatively low—despite the panicked official pronouncements that Soviet cinematography was being besieged by foreign influences. Even though there were few Soviet films that clearly reflect postmodern trends in European cinema during the Thaw, this phenomenon is nonetheless significant for two reasons. First, these films attracted much attention from the authorities, the intellectual community, and filmmakers abroad. Second, because of the largely negative attention these productions received, they exercised an influence on the cultural arena that was disproportionate to their small numbers, defining the parameters for representing "authentic" Soviet heroism.

War as Alienation: Andrzej Wajda's *Kanal* and Sergei Bondarchuk's *A Fate of a Man*

The controversial Polish director Andrzej Wajda (1926-) transformed not only postwar Polish filmmaking but also lay the groundwork for changing representations of the Second World War in the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Wajda's famous 1950s trilogy—*Generation* (Pokolenie) in 1955, *Kanal* (Kanał) in 1957, and *Ashes and Diamonds* (Popiół i diament) in 1958—reinvented the concept of heroism in wartime. Instead of soldiers who confidently fought against a caricaturish enemy, Wajda presented much more ambiguous characters who simultaneously expressed courage and doubt, acting with both determination and folly. Moreover, Wajda was one of the first Eastern Bloc filmmakers to show the Second World War as a psychological state that affected participants in distinctly different ways. Polish dissident and writer Adam Michnik commented on the ambiguity of Wajda's protagonists: "In each of them he sees Polish honesty and courage, Polish naivety and confusion, and the inevitability of Polish defeat. His characters lose as Poles and as citizens. Their redemption is resistance to fate, a fate which inevitably ends in undeserved defeat."[11] In contrast to the dictates of socialist realism, which demanded that sanctified heroes emerge victorious convinced of the righteousness of their mission, Wajda gave voice to ordinary men who experienced fear as well as bravery and died knowing that, perhaps, their death had no purpose.

With his three films Wajda undermined the Stalinist interpretation of the war years, bringing the ideological dimension to a minimum and accentuating the scale of human suffering through the individual fates of his complex heroes. Wajda's unique perspective, although specifically Polish in its tradition of romanticism, lay a foundation for Soviet directors who also wished to complicate the sanitized vision of war that Stalin imposed soon

[11] Janusz Fogler ed., *Wajda Films* (Warsaw: Art and Film Publishers, 1996), 13.

after 1945. Even though Wajda's trilogy tackled traumatic and contentious events specific to Polish history and sought to intervene quite literally in the construction on public memory in his homeland, Wajda's depiction of World War II resonated with artists across the Eastern Bloc as they combated Stalin's artistic dogma and his historical interventionism. In a recent roundtable discussion, Russian directors and art critics of various generations frequently cited Wajda as an inspiration for their own work; in fact, they reflect nostalgically on the significant influence the Polish Film School played in Soviet cinematography long after the mid-1960s.[12] This is not to say that Soviet directors copied Wajda but rather that he tapped into a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the status quo among East European and Soviet intellectuals after Stalin's death in 1953.

Of all the countries in the Soviet bloc, Poland and Hungary emerged as the most revisionist of the existing state of affairs. Mirroring and engaging Vladimir Pomerantsev's call for more sincerity in literature in 1953, Polish writers openly criticized the artistic value of socialist realism.[13] In 1954, I. I. Anisimov, the director of the Soviet Gor'kii Institute for World Literature, sent a report to the Central Committee, notifying the authorities that, on his recent trip to Poland, he encountered a hostile environment, which he believed to be influenced directly by Pomerantsev's "reactionary views." He reported that one leading journal questioned "the value of achievements in the realm of the arts under the current regime" while another demanded that "socialist realism, as a creative principle, has become bankrupt."[14] Less than a year after Anisimov's visit, Polish poet and Communist Party

[12] See "Nikto bol'she ne sdelaet ni *Pepel i almaz* ni *Tishinu i krik*" *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 71 (2005).

[13] Pomerantsev began his essay with following diagnosis and question: "Sincerity. This is exactly what, in my view, is lacking in some books and plays. And one must ask, how can one be sincere?"

[14] I. I. Anisimov filed the report on August 16, 1954, to P. N. Pospelov, a secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee. See RGANI f. 5, op. 17, d. 454, ll. 103-4.

member Adam Ważyk renewed the call for artistic self-determination and expressed disdain for socialist realism and its insistence on presenting a varnished reality.[15] His *A Poem for Adults* (Poemat dla dorosłych) invokes Charles Fourier, a nineteenth-century French utopian socialist thinker known for his outlandish theories, such as that the seas would lose their salinity and turn to lemonade and that the North Pole would be milder than the Mediterranean.

> *Fourier, the dreamer, charmingly foretold*
> *that lemonade would flow in seas.*
> *Does it flow?*
> *They drink sea water,*
> *crying:*
> *"lemonade!"*
> *returning home secretly*
> *to vomit.*

Between 1955 and 1963 a group of directors, known collectively as the Polish Film School, took advantage of the temporary cultural and political thaw to liberate national consciousness from patent fabrications permeating Stalinist politics and socialist realist aesthetics. Andrzej Wajda, Andrzej Munk, Jerzy Kawalerowicz, Wojciech Has, Kazimierz Kutz, Tadeusz Konwicki, and Stanisław Różewicz, all of whom trained at the Łódź Film School, contributed to the renaissance of national cinematography and fashioned a world-renowned artistic school. Although distinct in their themes, artistic sensibilities, and philosophical attitudes, moviemakers of the Polish Film School created works influenced by Italian neorealism, imbued with the sense of social consciousness, directly or implicitly addressed the (memory of) Second World War, and reflected on the concept of romantic heroism and Polish nationhood.[16]

[15] Stanislaw Baranczak, "Before the Thaw: The Beginning of Dissent in Postwar Polish Literature and the Case of Adam Wazyk's 'A Poem for Adults," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 3, no. 1 (1989): 4-21.

By the late 1950s, Polish artists, especially filmmakers, had become quite outspoken about their opposition to official interference in the realm of the arts and Soviet authorities felt uneasy about these developments. These developments in Poland could not be contained and at the 1960 Karlovy Vary Film Festival in Czechoslovakia a spirit of defiance seeped into the proceedings. Cynthia Grenier, international film critic and "Life" editor of the *Washington Times*, observed an unusually charged atmosphere in Karlovy Vary that year, reporting that: "A young Polish scriptwriter, Aleksander Ścibor Rylski stated calmly to some two hundred movie people and journalists in the Open Forum that he had not seen a good Soviet movie in years, and that Soviet concepts of human nature tended to be far too simple for his tastes." Even more confrontational was Rylski's provocation addressed later that day at the indignant Soviet director M. Romm: "I don't see why Mr. Romm wants to put this discussion on a political basis. For me, capitalism and socialism are not barriers separating art forms. A film is good or bad. Not socialist or capitalist. A bad socialist film is just as bad as a bad capitalist film."[17]

Wajda's postwar trilogy evolved within this rebellion against artistic conformism and played a central role in promoting a fresh way of thinking about both the legacy of World War II and the human condition. Although the revision of Stalinist narratives and artistic principles went much deeper in Poland, by 1956 Soviet war films also began tackling topics once unmentionable in the public sphere, such as the high numbers of POWs and their fates, the early military defeats of the Red Army, treason in the ranks, and the incompetence of the top-brass. Perhaps the most important alteration to the Stalinist master narrative was the

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[16] For a more detailed description of the Polish School see Marek Haltof, *Polish National Cinema* (New York: Berghahn, 2002), 74-76.

[17] Cynthia Grenier, "Berlin, Karlovy-Vary, Venice," *Film Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (1960): 26.

acknowledgment that war brought much needless suffering to civilians and military personnel.[18] This development in the Soviet context tied in directly to Khrushchev's admission at the Twentieth Party Congress that the catastrophic human and material losses of the initial months of the war could have been avoided had Stalin heeded the numerous warnings about the attack; not disregarded the need for amplified arms production; and not wiped out much of the top military leadership during the Great Terror.[19] In no uncertain terms, Khrushchev pronounced: "Did we have time and the capabilities for such preparations? Yes, we had the time and the capability. . . .Had our industry been mobilized properly and in time to supply the army with the necessary material, our wartime losses would have been decidedly smaller."[20] Although the message was intended to undercut Stalin's personality cult, it also prompted a rather bleak vision of war as an avoidable tragedy rather than a triumph of the Communist Party leadership. The revelation simultaneously discredited the image of Stalin as a brilliant military leader and cardinally revised the view that the party did all it could to protect its citizens. By exposing Stalin's blunders before and during the German invasion of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev essentially allowed a contestation of the memory of Second World War—or at least its opening months.

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[18] During the decade preceding the start of the German offensive, the Soviet government encouraged artists to depict a triumphant war in which the Red Army suffers minimal losses. Blustering slogans, repeated ad nauseam beginning in 1935, assured citizens that war would happen on foreign soil (*na chuzhoi territorii*), would be carried out with thunderous force (*moguchim molnienosnym udarom*) and would be won with little (Soviet) blood spilt (*maloi krov'iu*). Between 1935 and the beginning of the war in 1941, the Stalinist propaganda machine inundated Soviet citizens with songs, plays, and films that depicted war as kid's play. In fact, commenting on one particularly naive war play, a critic soberly commented: "Wars look like that only in children's war games." E. L. Dzigan's 1938 motion picture *If War Comes Tomorrow* (*Esli zavtra voina*) is typical of the film genre that emerged during this time.

[19] Nikita S. Khrushchev, *The Crimes of the Stalin Era: Special Report to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* (New York: The New Leader, 1956), 36-43.

[20] Ibid., 37-38

Using the de-Stalinized interpretation of war, Soviet artists could, like Wajda, more easily evade the socialist realist viewpoint and depict man in an environment defined by senseless carnage and chaos. Moreover, because Khrushchev extolled the ordinary folk, rather than top generals and Stalin, as the true heroes of World War II, writers and filmmakers could pay more attention to the experiences of average soldiers in their own wartime hell. Thus Khrushchev's decision to uncover the reality of what happened in the first months of the German invasion became the jumping-off point for a reexamination of the Stalinist ideas on Soviet masculinity. Because Khrushchev's report painted civilians and soldiers as lambs being led to slaughter by the so-called Father of the Peoples, Khrushchev-era writers and filmmakers gravitated toward depicting the rank and file navigating the treacherous terrain of war by themselves—often helpless, disoriented, and abandoned by their fellow comrades.

Both Polish and Soviet directors, motivated by the urge to unearth a more authentic, more representative experience of the war, revised a key aspect of Stalinist masculinity: the protagonist's connection to the patriarch and the fraternity. Directors of war films in the post-Stalin era replaced the ideological pathos, which tied men horizontally to the patriarch and vertically to the fratriarchy, with a humanitarian pathos that symbolically linked men's fate and happiness to a feminine object of desire. In postwar Soviet movies the soldier fixates his gaze on his wife, mother, or girlfriend and fights to reunite with them. The Polish patriot instinctively serves the motherland, giving his life to ensure the existence of a sovereign and independent *patria*. The hero therefore most often acts in solitude, the patriarch either absent or unable to help while the fratriarchy suffers disorganization and disunity. In both scenarios, however, the fantasy never materializes, the hero rarely unites with his family or lives to see

the *patria* liberated; the relationships damages rarely become whole again. The focus of postwar films about World War II thus becomes the inevitable trauma of the masculine subject.

Sergei Bondarchuk's 1959 directorial debut, *Fate of a Man* (Sud'ba cheloveka),[21] and Wajda's *Kanal*[22] encapsulate the larger cinematic trend which revised the definition of war and undermined the main principles underlying Stalinist masculinity. At first glance, the two films have few commonalities. *Kanal*, told from a third person point of view, narrates the story of the Third Platoon during the last days of the Warsaw Uprising (late September 1944) and chronicles their attempts to save themselves from a Nazi onslaught by slogging through the labyrinthine sewage canals beneath the city center. Bondarchuk's film focuses on an ordinary Soviet soldier as he relates the horrors he underwent during the war: capture at the very beginning of the war, concentration and forced-labor camps in Russia and abroad, and the death of his entire family. Despite the obvious differences in content and narrative conventions, *Kanal* and *Fate* broke new ground in that they placed previously marginalized events and groups center stage and began restructuring the Stalinist masculine trope to more accurately reflect the trauma of war.

Both films address and build on wartime issues that had, up to that point, received scant attention in the public sphere. *Kanal* was the first film to depict the Warsaw Uprising in a historically accurate way. The very portrayal of the uprising presented an enormous ideological challenge because it reflected positively on the participation of the homegrown resistance movement, the Home Army, which the communist authorities cast in a negative

[21] Bondarchuk's film was an adaptation of the Mikhail Sholokhov classic novel of the same title. The novel was published in 1957.

[22] Jerzy Stefan Stawiński wrote the script based on his novel of the same title. Stawiński himself survived in the sewers as a soldier of the Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*).

light after the war. Wajda faced an even more difficult choice about how to discuss the refusal of the Red Army to aid the fledgling anti-Nazi insurrection despite being stationed a mere hundred meters from Polish positions across the Vistula river. The uprising, which began on August 1, 1944, as part of a nationwide rebellion (Operation Tempest), was supposed to last for only a few days until Soviet forces reached the city. But because the Soviet advance stopped short of entering Warsaw, Polish resistance had no option but to continue fighting the German war machine unaided for sixty-three days until their surrender on October 2, 1944. As a result of Soviet betrayal, 200,000 Poles died in the uprising.

Since this event figured as a national tragedy and could have ignited an explosive political scandal, Wajda expressed the tragedy of the Soviet treason symbolically without explicitly mentioning the presence of Soviet army. Two members of the platoon, Stokrotka and Korab, manage to reach an exit that leads onto the Vistula but soon realize that it has been sealed shut, condemning them to a certain death. To turn back would mean certain death by asphyxiation or exhaustion. As the camera captures the couple for the last time, Stokrotka presses her face against the iron bars, impotently looking across the river, symbolically gazing at freedom within reach. Before the viewer leaves the young pair condemned to death, we see Stokrotka's perspective, looking directly at the positions where the Soviet armed forces stood idly as innocent people, like Stokrotka and Korab, perished. As Wajda himself remarked: "I could not show that Soviet troops were waiting on the other side of the Vistula river while the Warsaw Uprising died on this side. It was enough that I led the protagonists of my film to the canal's outlet, from which they could see the other side of the river. The audience knew what I wanted to say."[23] The effect was undeniable. A survivor of

[23] Qouted in Janina Falkowska, *Andrzej Wajda: History, Politics, and Nostalgia in Polish Cinema* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 49.

the uprising reflected on the film's importance: "Until now, ordinary heroes have been, for many years, pushed into the shadows, into silence, into the mudslinging of false accusations and slander."[24]

Bondarchuk tackled a national tragedy of similar magnitude in his *Fate of a Man* in that he cast a POW, a member of a highly stigmatized group of men, as the protagonist of his film. Private Sergei Sokolov, the hero of the film, made an unusual choice for the Soviet context since POWs had been, officially at least, depicted as politically suspect elements of society until 1956. The Stalin-era authorities believed that POWs who survived German concentration camps must have acted disloyally in order to save their lives.[25] Stalin's policy considered these the returnees automatically guilty of treason and consequently propaganda treated POWs as having given themselves willingly into captivity. As Aleksandra Kollontai, the Soviet ambassador to Sweden, commented in mid-1940: "The Soviet Union does not recognize Soviet POWs. We consider Soviet soldiers who fell into German hands deserters." Approximately 2.8 million veterans—roughly 14 percent of the total—had returned, sometimes through forced repatriation, as POWs. A minority of returning POWs faced the firing squad or Gulag sentences while a majority lived on the margins of postwar society, unable to relocate, hold a steady job, receive any assistance from the state, or, in many cases, reunite with their families and loved ones.

Bondarchuk structured his directorial debut as a first-person narrative; Sokolov tells his life tale to a stranger as they wait for a boat to ferry them to the other side of the river. Sokolov immediately establishes himself as a loyal servant of the state, whose destiny has

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[24] Fogler, *Wajda Films*, 50.

[25] For a more detailed description of treatment of Soviet POWs after World War II see Mark Edele, *Soviet Veterans of World War II: A Popular Movement in an Authoritarian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 102-28.

borne the marks of the regime's campaigns and wars. Born in 1900, Sokolov fought with the Red Army during the Civil War, participated in the anti-kulak drive in Kuban, and lost his entire family to famine before finally settling down in his native Voronezh, marrying his wife, and becoming a father of two. Bondarchuk also takes the time to illustrate Sokolov's ordinariness, showing him laboring, witnessing the birth of his children, drinking (frequently), and enjoying marital bliss. But the domestic idyll proves short-lived as the Second World War extracts Sokolov from his natural environment: the family nest.

In addition to giving voice to the experiences of people who would have otherwise gone unrecognized or been stigmatized, Bondarchuk and Wajda brought into sharp relief the psychological dimension of the war. In both films the first third of the narrative is bright, full of light, and filled with energy. Although Wajda begins the film twenty-four hours before the platoon enters the sewage system, the soldiers are still fighting, still willing to defend their city and country. Once they enter the canals, however, hope, as well as light, disappears. The sunlight that breaks up the stinging darkness of the deadly underworld signifies danger and uncertainty. As with Stokrotka and Korab, sunshine denotes a dead end since the sunlit openings also provide Nazis with a way to fill the labyrinth with poison gas. Wajda makes a direct reference to Dante's *Inferno* when one of the platoon members, literally gone mad from exhaustion and horror, quotes from the poet's *magnum opus*: "I saw a people smothered in a filth that out of human privies seemed to flow."[26] As the *New York Times* reviewer noted after seeing the movie: "The monologue of the musician gives us to understand . . . that

[26] The passage the madman quotes is from Canto XVIII in which Dante describes the last two circles of Hell reserved for sinners who commit conscious fraud or treachery. The flatterers are steeped in human excrement, which represents the fraudulent words they produced.

Dante had been in the sewers before the Uprising fighters, that this is hell, and that all living things have been condemned to this hideous, stinking cesspool."[27]

Bondarchuk's film manages to reflect the same sort of emotional devastation wrought by war. Once Sokolov boards the train headed to the frontline, he enters his own underground hell. Everything he witnesses on his journey through the wartime hellhole breaks him down from within; little by little he dies inside as he tries to preserve his sanity under the most inhumane conditions. Like the Polish resistance fighters, he can never truly emerge out of the metaphoric inferno whole. The only flashes of light Sokolov glimpses consist of flashbacks of his marital life and images of his family members begging him to return home. But, as in Wajda's *Kanal*, these tantalizing hints of life in a barren landscape of war are but a mirage; when Sokolov returns home, he discovers a bombed-out hole where his house used to be and finds out that his wife and daughter had died three years prior. He cries: "This life of mine is nothing but a nightmare. . . . It turns out that for two years I have been talking to the dead." Thus for both Sokolov and the Polish soldiers war becomes History's literal and metaphoric torture chamber.

Kanal and *Fate of a Man* do not represent narratives of nations coming together and becoming whole but breaking down and disintegrating under the weight of wartime horror. Film scholar Paul Coates's assessment of the Warsaw Uprising holds true of Sokolov's experience as well: "Thus Uprising is not the Romantic rebellion cherished in popular memory but a nightmare of abandonment, one of the 'crimes and follies' of Gibbon's vision of history."[28] Bondarchuk and Wajda represent the collapse of the national community

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[27] Bosley Crowther, "Screen: Wartime Poland," *The New York Times*, May 10, 1961, p. 52.

[28] Paul Coates, *The Red and the White: The Cinema of People's Poland* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), 119.

through the breakdown of the fratriarchy symbolically tying the soldiers into a unified whole; both films trace the dissolution of the fraternal order as brothers betray and abandon each other.

Fate of a Man consists of a whole number of episodes, showcasing that cowardice and treachery, not valor and loyalty, defined the relationship between Soviet soldiers. Right after capturing them, the Germans hold the POWs in an Orthodox church. A religious man, not wanting to commit a sacrilegious act by relieving himself in a place of worship, bangs on the doors of the church and begs his captors to let him out for a minute. His plea is met by a round of bullets from the other side of the door. The other prisoners, whose sadistic laughter taunted the poor soul and cacophonously bounced off the church walls, ceased as they saw the God-fearing man fall dead to the floor. The scene, so surreal and nightmarish, mirrored the inferno atmosphere of Warsaw's sewers, where voices of the lost soldiers eerily echoed against the surface of the underground Styx.

In the same church, a POW Kryzhnev lightheartedly tells a fellow inmate that he will eagerly betray him as a party member to their German captors: "If in tomorrow's lineup they start calling out for Jews, commissars, and communists, it won't do you any good to hide, Lieutenant. What did you think? That by getting rid of your uniform you will pass for a private? Well you won't! I'll point you out right away! Besides, will you be ashamed to admit that you're a communist?" Despite the lieutenant's pleas for mercy, Kryzhnev simply responds: "I have myself to think about." Having overheard the conversation, Sokolov decides to punish the turncoat soldier and save the younger officer; he motions to the lieutenant to hold Kryzhnev's legs and then strangles the would-be traitor. Thus the only murder Sokolov commits in the film is against his compatriot; more importantly, he does not

choke him because he conspired against a communist but because Sokolov could not abide treason. Significantly, after the pair kills Kryzhnev, they do not make an example of the traitor but move to a different corner of the church in order to avoid trouble.

Fate of a Man further explores the theme of a degenerating masculine community by filming men in Nazi camps as they go crazy from mental and physical exhaustion. In one of the labor camps, where the POWs have to haul rocks up a steep mountain, Sokolov attempts to prop up a weak prisoner and push him forward so the guards do not shoot him. As they pass a Nazi officer, the worn-out POW locks eyes with his torturer in a way that betrays temporary madness from sleep and food deprivation. The German approaches the POW and coldheartedly pushes him over the cliff. Although the scene displays the enemy's cruelty, it also marks the breakdown of a monumental masculinity that exercised an absolute monopoly under Stalin and points to a damaged fratriarchal system. The soldier dies because camp life wore him down; his seemingly defiant stand is the result of his exhaustion rather than moral or ideological conviction. His death, furthermore, does not evoke protest from his fellow inmates or serve as a mobilizing call to action. He vanishes unnoticed and unmourned by his fellow brethren.

Whereas Bondarchuk expresses the disintegration of the fraternal collective in episodic fashion, Wajda traces the gradual collapse of the Third Platoon as their quest for the liberation of Poland ends in captivity and death. Almost as soon as the platoon descends into the sewers, its members become separated through a series of circumstances and the film follows three separate story lines that unite in the protagonists' tragic finale. Although the platoon members's separation speaks to the disunity of the fratriarchy, the final scene references the irreparable disarray of the masculine order. Lieutenant Zadra, the commander

of the platoon, emerges from a manhole with his sergeant-major Kula into deserted city streets and a pulverized city. Exhausted and mired in excrement, Zadra is nonetheless ready to pick up arms and continue fighting. As Zadra rejoices in his temporary reprieve, he becomes aware that his men (his metaphoric sons) are not coming up immediately behind him as he expected. When asked about the whereabouts of the rest of the company, Kula admits having lied that they were behind them: "They're all lost. We've left them behind long ago. I lied when I said they were following." As the realization dawns on Zadra that his men still hopelessly wonder the infernal maze, he shoots Kula, the last remaining member of the platoon, shouting: "You coward!" Then, with a look of a man gone mad with grief, he descends back into the sewers and certain death, murmuring repeatedly: "My company! My company!" The climax of the film thus confirms that isolation and breakdown are the governing formal and thematic principles of *Kanal*. As in *Fate of a Man*, the masculine community suffers treason, disunity, and lack of discipline.

Although Wajda and Bondarchuk created these unorthodox and un-heroic narratives out of different motives—Wajda to commemorate the Warsaw Uprising and reflect critically on the romanticized interpretations of Polish history; Bondarchuk to rehabilitate the memory of Soviet POWs and commemorate the suffering of rank-and-file soldiers—they both revise the Stalinist myth of World War II. *Kanal* and *Fate of a Man* not only furnish a more realistic experience of war as a site of trauma for many, but also undermine the core symbolism associated with war as a formative arena for masculine identity; in these films war does not strengthen but devastates bonds buttressing the fratriachal community. Moreover, by utilizing representatives of previously marginalized groups and accentuating the trauma of war, Wajda and Bondarchuk use the modern soldier to destabilize the mythical and epic warriors of a

romanticized past: *bogatyr*—Russian medieval knights—and *uhlan*—the Polish mounted officers. Ultimately, Sokolov's reflection on his frontline experience aptly illustrates that war became the embodiment of trauma for the postwar masculine subject: "Sometimes I cannot sleep at night. I just stare into the darkness and think to myself: Why has life tortured and punished me so?" (*Inoi raz ne spish' noch'iu, gliadish' v temnotu pustymi glazami i dumaesh': "Za chto zhe ty, zhizn', menia tak pokalechila? Za chto tak iskaznila?*)

Working-Class Masculinity as an Expression of the Intelligentsia's Political Alienation

Although the great majority of Soviet films focus on the lives of the working classes, the socialist realist insistence on optimism and didacticism largely prohibited directors from exploring the full range of working-class realities. Even in the atmosphere of Thaw-era liberalization directors had to exercise restraint in representing the less attractive sides of working-class life since the state continuously idealized the figure of the worker. Because Soviet art professed faith in the worker and his potential, even films that showed negative working-class characters had to emphasize the certainty of their spiritual rehabilitation. To criticize the working class without demonstrating faith in its progress under a regime that billed itself as "the workers' state" implied that the party was failing in its fundamental task. In this context, Mark Osep'ian's 1967 production *Three Days of Viktor Chernyshev* (Tri dnia Viktora Chernysheva) arguably represents the first Soviet film that refused to romanticize the ordinary worker and present him as yet another example of how the socialist order produces only exemplary citizens. In creating a tableau of an outwardly obedient but apathetic and petty-criminal working-class youth, Osep'ian sketched a profile of working-class masculinity that resembled one that emerged during the so-called British New Wave during the early 1960s.

Between 1959 and 1963 British cinema produced a number of films that received critical attention at home and abroad because of their real-life depictions of working-class masculinity. For the first time in British film history, the big screen openly showed scenes filled with obscene language, moral depravity, and sexual violence. In addition to presenting moviegoers with scandalous sides of working-class reality, it also shocked with its portrayal of the poverty and monotony that defined the everyday in industrial neighborhoods. This set of motion pictures became known as the British New Wave.[29] These films collectively constructed working-class characters who expressed a generalized defiance against the reigning status quo. By faithfully documenting a heretofore underrepresented group and subculture, British New Wave directors displayed the limits and hollowness of the officially propagated system of values that benefited the ruling echelons of society. Under the pretext that they strove to capture the ignored or idealized sociological realities of the working-class and lower middle-class individuals, these filmmakers expressed a discontent with "the Establishment" and "the phonies" who unthinkingly followed the pack.[30]

The British New Wave made the nation's ruling class take a long hard look at the crass, violent, and dull existence the majority of British working-class citizens were living. In these dark sides, filmmakers undermined the upper crust's dominant construct of the working

[29] The most celebrated examples of the wave include: Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top*, Tony Richardson's *Look Back in Anger* and *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner*, Karel Reisz's *Saturday Night and Sunday Evening*, Lindsay Anderson's *This Sporting Life*, and John Schlesinger's *Billy Liar*.

[30] The British New Wave has roots in the period's literature and theater. During the late 1950s the British literary and theatrical scene was taken over by a group of men who came to be known as the "angry young men"—despite the fact that men whom journalists and critics categorized as such considered themselves neither angry nor saw themselves a part of a unified movement. Nonetheless, they shared some traits that united them in a general. These so-called angry young men rejected the cultural monopoly of institutions that exercised a sociopolitical and cultural monopoly over British life. The monarchy, the Church, Parliament, and (from the 1920s onwards), the BBC had a decisive impact on the construction of British identity and a group of postwar intellectuals and artists challenged the undisputed power of these establishments by ridiculing them as antiquated and out-of-touch. See Bill Williamson, *The Temper of the Times: British Society since World War II* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 89.

class as less educated but noble, rowdy but malleable. These films thus represented the British intelligentsia's protest against the privileged classes' unchallenged monopoly on power. This critical stance is perhaps best expressed by playwright John Osborne, whose 1956 play *Look Back in Anger* gave voice to the anti-Establishment movement: "I can't go on laughing at the idiocies of the people who rule our lives. We have been laughing at their gay little madness, at their point-to-points, at the postural slump of the well-off and mentally under-privileged, at their stooping shoulders and strained accents, at their waffling cant, for too long." Thus the working-class heroes of the British New Wave—the so-called angry young men—became mouthpieces of nonconformist intellectuals who mocked the monarchy, the Church, and the Parliament as hopelessly outdated. Britain was, they argued, "hidebound by class, struggling under the weight of its imperial history, tired, dreary and conformist."[31]

Despite claims that their films strove for documentary objectivity, neither the British New Wave directors nor Osep'ian recorded the lives of their working class protagonists with ethnographic accuracy. This is not to say that their films did not endeavor to accurately document working-class lives. On the contrary, the motion pictures amazed audiences with their unvarnished depiction of working-class environs. Indeed, compared to the (highly) stylized films that preceded them, social realist productions appeared shockingly realistic. British directors in particular were so bent on recreating the domestic lives of their main characters that critics dismissively referred to their productions as "kitchen sink dramas." At the same time, however realistic on the surface, these films deployed working-class masculinity a cautionary tale about mass culture and the spiritual deadness it breeds. These mercurial celluloid protagonists, even when exasperatingly inconsistent in their logic and

[31] Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Little & Brown, 2005), 140.

action, answer only to themselves. They do not undermine the system with any larger agenda in mind since they preoccupy themselves with (relatively) petty grievances and pleasures. Thus these supposedly sociological portrayals of working class youth act as a symbol of how societies that expect and encourage conformism eventually produce men who, as Oscar Wilde put it, "know the price of everything and the value of nothing."

However unique their trajectory in their respective national contexts, films about "angry young men" owe their aesthetic and philosophical foundations to the work of Italian neorealist directors of the late 1940s and early 1950s. By looking at the fundamental aspects of Italian postwar cinematography, it becomes apparent that, despite national variations, postwar Italian, British, and Soviet cinemas shared similar concerns regarding issues of class-consciousness, the sociopolitical role of film, and the nature of film as art. All these concerns produced a specific way of understanding and representing masculinity. Even though there existed discernible variety among Italian neorealists, the general characteristics that gave the movement its specificity and recognizability included "location shooting, lengthy takes, unobtrusive editing, natural lighting, a predominance of medium and long shots, respect for continuity of time and space, use of contemporary, true-to-life subjects, an uncontrived, open-ended plot, working-class protagonists, a nonprofessional cast, dialogue in the vernacular, and implied social criticism."[32] Although Italian neorealists did not uniformly follow the elements enumerated above, all their creations emphasized a moral message—sometimes from a Christian humanist angle and sometimes from a Marxist perspective.[33] Neorealist directors, therefore, aimed to "promote a true objectivity—one that would force

[32] Millicent Marcus, *Italian Film in the Light of Neorealism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 22.

[33] Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones, *A New Guide to Italian Cinema* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 74-77.

viewers to abandon the limitations of a strictly personal perspective and to embrace the reality of the 'others' . . . with all the ethical responsibility that such a vision entails."[34] Roberto Rossellini, a central figure of the movement, himself noted in *Cahiers du cinema*: "For me, Neorealism is, above all, a moral position. It then became an aesthetic position, but at the beginning it was moral. . . . Ideas, not images are important."[35]

In a reversal of the Mussolini-era hero-mongering productions, neorealists elevated to the level of protagonist previously underrepresented social classes, played often (though not always) by non-professional actors: partisan groups of Roberto Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta* and *Paisà* (Paisan, 1946), the unemployed proletariat of Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (The Bicycle Thief, 1947), and the Sicilian fisherman of Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (The Earth Trembles, 1948). Instead of glossing over sociopolitical reality, neorealist directors critically (re)interpreted Italian history and reality.[36] The long-standing problems of Italian political history—such as regional disparity, political corruption, and class inequality—received attention for the first time.[37]

A decade after the neorealist movement left an indelible mark on Italian cinematography, both the Soviet and British film industry began incorporating neorealist principles. The most immediate and visible example of neorealism's transnational influence could be witnessed in the British "Free Cinema" movement.[38] On February 5, 1956, the

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[34] Marcus, *Italian Film*, 23.

[35] Mario Verdone, *Storia del cinema italiano* (Rome: Tascabili Economici Newton, 1995), 43.

[36] For a broad consideration of issues of Italian history in a range of films see Angela Dalle Vacche, *The Body in the Mirror: Shapes of History in Italian Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

[37] *Joseph Luzzi, "Romantic Allegory, Postwar Film, and the Question of Italy,"* Modern Language Quarterly *68 (2007): 71*.

National Film Theatre hosted the first of six film events featuring non-professional experimental shorts. The co-founder of the movement, film critic and director Lindsay Anderson, underscored that the Free Cinema movement surfaced because mainstream British cinema became aesthetically ossified and politically impotent. According to Anderson, contemporary British film was not contemporary at all; it rejected the responsibility to criticize, privileged depictions of a metropolitan Southern English culture, and silently supported the country's class inequalities. He protested that many profound postwar social changes received no attention on the big screen: "According to the testimony of our filmmakers, Britain is a country without problems, in which no essential changes have occurred in the past fifty years, and which still remains the centre of an Empire on which the sun will never have the bad manners to set."[39] In Anderson's view, domestic motion pictures remained curiously silent on a range of contemporaneous topics: strikes, Teddy Boys, nuclear tests, and the presence of American troops, Italian miners and Hungarian refugees. In light of the willful ignorance on the part of cinema industry leaders, Anderson demanded that moviegoers consider whether they should continue to accept distorted images "our cinema is bent on creating."[40] Equally as significant was Anderson's outrage at the fact that British films systematically privileged the lives of the upper classes and willfully warped the depiction of the working classes. He argued that working classes came across as infantilized simpletons: "They make excellent servants, good tradesmen, and first-class soldiers. On the march, in slit trenches, below decks, they crack their funny Cockney jokes or think about the

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[38] Besides Vittorio De Sica, Roberto Rossellini, and Giuseppe De Santis, Free Cinema creators also drew their inspiration from the humanism of John Ford, the focus on the everyday from British wartime documentaries of Humphrey Jennings, and from the lyrical and surrealist cinematography of interwar French filmmaker Jean Vigo.

[39] Tom Maschler, *Declaration* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1958), 141.

[40] Ibid., 142.

mountains of Wales. They die well, often with a last, mumbled message on their lips to the girl they left behind them in the Old Kent Road."[41]

Free Cinema's first program featured a credo that echoed Anderson's sentiments and offered a particular perspective on the four featured amateur filmmakers: Lorenza Mazzetti, Lindsay Anderson, Karel Reisz, and Tony Richardson. These four directors stated that the films presented fittingly express the group's belief: "in freedom, in the importance of people, and the significance of the everyday." Moreover Anderson insisted that the Free Cinema contributors believe that: "*No film can be too personal. The image speaks. Sound amplifies and comments. Size is irrelevant. Perfection is not an aim. An attitude means a style. A style means an attitude*." When asked in an interview what precisely the last two clauses implied, Karl Reisz responded: "Well, it means that a style is not a matter of camera angles or fancy footwork, it's an expression, an accurate expression of your particular opinion."[42]

Although the concept of working-class "angry young men" figured much more prominently in British cinema than in Soviet film, Osep'ian's production is nonetheless significant since it expressed the view of an equally disgruntled intelligentsia. As mentioned above, in the majority of cases Soviet directors could not cast working-class characters in a negative light without risking censorship and temporary restrictions on filmmaking activity. Moreover, socialist realism obliged directors to concentrate on positive and hopeful resolutions. To approach feature films in an objective documentary fashion *a la* Free Cinema meant certain official condemnation. In 1963, A. V. Romanov, chairman of the State

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[41] Ibid., 141.

[42] Interview in 2001 at BFI involving Free Cinema pioneers David Robinson, Walter Lassally, Lorenza Mazzetti and Karel Reisz. Accessed on January 21, 2010 http://www.bfi.org.uk/features/interviews/freecinema.html

Committee of Cinematography criticized "certain artists" who, wanting to be fashionable, unthinkingly followed a Western trend that called for depicting "life, caught unawares" (*zhizn' zastignutaia vrasplokh*). Romanov publicly shamed Soviet artists for "uncritically reproducing the trivialities of daily life in a naturalistic fashion" and for "focusing specifically on dark, ugly, and sick social phenomena."[43] Considering the ideological obstacles, the mere appearance of *Three Days of Viktor Chernyshev* represented an achievement in and of itself. Even though the film received very limited distribution, its emergence merits attention since it utilizes the depiction of working-class masculinity as a way to outline a broader disintegration of social values and norms.

Karel Reisz's 1960 *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*, as a production representative of the British New Wave, shares many philosophical and artistic principles with Osep'ian's *Three Days*. Both movies build the narrative by filming an ordinary weekend in the lives of two typical working-class lads. Despite the fact that *Saturday Night* takes place in Nottingham and *Three Days* in Moscow, they show working-class pastimes and neighborhoods in an unflattering light: morally impoverished and mired in world-weary ennui, the suburban landscapes depress the senses. Moreover, days pass without anything of merit happening to distinguish one hour from another; only trivial household dramas break the tedium.[44]

The two "heroes" inhabiting this sterile spatial and temporal environment—Arthur Seaton and Viktor Chernyshev—share a similar biography and stand in for their cohort. Both

[43] RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 635, l. 106.

[44] As historian Arthur Marwick points out, Allen Sillitoe's 1958 novel *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*, on which Reisz's script was based, contained many more graphic scenes and gratuitous obscenity. See Arthur Marwick, "*Room at the Top, Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and the 'Cultural Revolution' in Britain," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 1 (1984): 127-52.

represent the legions of eighteen-year-olds who choose factory jobs after receiving a patchy high-school education and look forward to spending their hard-earned money on having a good time. Arthur and Viktor labor six-day workweeks and, unburdened with the responsibilities of family life, look forward to partying on Saturday night and recovering on Sunday morning. By setting the action almost entirely over the weekend, Osep'ian and Reisz allow the assumption that nothing meaningful happens over the course of the work week while the heroes inhabit their work space. To truly understand working-class youth culture, ironically, the two directors investigate their protagonists' leisure time.

Although neither Viktor nor Arthur could be described as "bad apples," they also do not live by a set of lofty ideals. While they commit or participate in misdeeds—Arthur has an affair with a co-worker's wife whom he impregnates and Viktor watches on as his neighborhood gang beats up an innocent bystander—they impress more with a lack of any real values. Thus, in addition to their biographical similarities, they share a life philosophy, or, more precisely, the lack of one. Arthur lives by the credo "All I want is a good time. The rest is propaganda!" while Viktor Chernyshev, who lacks Arthur's bravado, declares "I am just like everyone else" (*Ia—kak vse.*). Despite Arthur's more pronounced belligerence, both characters, unsatisfied with the monotonous future they know lies ahead, want desperately to be left alone to pursue their small pleasures, to lose themselves in the moment. Even their small rebellions lack any real meaning. They act out simply to confirm to themselves that they still have some choices to make—even if these choices are illusory: self-destructiveness masquerading as the exercise of free will. Literary critic Nona Balakian accurately assesses the internal make-up of these angry young men: "Cowardly and suspicious in their human relations, motivated solely by self-interest, uninhibited in language and disrespectful of

women, they are heroic only in their resistance to the straightjacket mold tendered to them by society."[45]

The manner in which a Soviet critic described Viktor applies equally well to Arthur: "A void exists where there should be a personality and this vacuum is always ready to be filled with any random content."[46] Viktor and his crowd simply hang around their neighborhood, waiting for something to happen to them. They fill their time by hanging around the corner, recycling jokes, bragging about their sexual conquests, and harassing passersby. Arthur and his mates similarly spend their time off drinking themselves into a stupor, chasing potential mates, and aggravating the local middle-age busybodies. They do not search for adventure; they do not exhibit curiosity about the world around them; they espouse no beliefs nor seek them out. In stark contrast to the idealistic heroes of Khutsiev's *Lenin's Guard*, Viktor and his friends do not ask their elders "how to live?" but simply accept life as it comes.[47]

Because they do not profess allegiance to any ideology or search for answers, Viktor and Arthur represent the ultimate free agents and as such symbolize the system's worst enemy. After all, a man without convictions cannot be effectively manipulated or mobilized to do the collective's bidding. The book on which Reisz's film was based powerfully expresses Arthur's disdain for any type of authority: "I know whose faces I've got in my sights every time the new rifle cracks off: the snot-gobbling gett that takes my income tax,

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[45] Nona Balakian, "The Flight from Innocence: England's Newest Literary Generation," *Books Abroad* 33, no. 3 (1959): 262.

[46] M. Papava, "Razgovor cherez desiatiletie," *Iskusstvo kino* 6 (1968): 8.

[47] Alexander Prokhorov's essay comparing Osep'ian's *Three Days* and Khutsiev's *Lenin's Guard* shows that Osep'ian "parodies Khutsiev's picture, calling attention to the crisis of the Great Soviet Family mythology as it was redefined during the Thaw." See Helena Goscilo and Yana Hashamova, eds. *Cinepaternity: Fathers and Sons in Soviet and Post-Soviet Film* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 29-50.

the swivel-eyed swine that collects our rent, the big- headed bastard that gets my goat when he asks me to go to union meetings or sign a paper against what's happening in Kenya. As if I cared!"[48]

The heroes' passivity and egocentrism is motivated largely by their sense of entrapment. Arthur and Viktor perceive the benefits of participating in the system that provides them material security but simultaneously feel repelled by the uniformity and conformity such an arrangement breeds. When Arthur sees his father sitting in front of the television after a full day's work, he reflects on his parent's generation with barely disguised contempt: "They've got a TV set and a packet of fags, but they're dead from the neck up." And while Arthur excoriates the "mindless masses" for their uncritical participation in the world of consumerism he welcomes his paycheck, eagerly spending his salary on his Teddy-suits.[49] As literary scholar Peter Kalliney observes: "Arthur defines his political relationships through contradiction, both lauding the state for the stability and material comfort it has effected and deriding it in visions of violent revolution."[50]

The same contradictions define Viktor's logic. Viktor only perfunctorily engages in any sort of activity that is state-mandated. At the same time, he makes several positive references about turning eighteen and completing the two years of compulsory army service. In the factory he is obligated to sit through a Komsomol meeting; although he has no interest in the proceedings and refuses to take an active part, he endures the event with polite

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[48] Allan Sillitoe, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (New York: Plume, 1958), 136.

[49] In Sillitoe's novel Arthur's avid consumerism comes through much more directly: "He stood for some minutes in the cold, digging his hands into pockets and turning back lapels, sampling the good hundred pounds' worth of property hanging from an iron-bar. These were his riches, and he told himself that money paid-out on clothes was a sensible investment because it made him feel good as well as look good." Sillitoe, *Saturday Night*, 66.

[50] Peter Kalliney "Cities of Affluence: Masculinity, Class, and the Angry Young Men," *Modern Fiction Studies* 47, no. 1 (2001): 92-116.

passivity. On Sunday afternoon, he is required to join members of his factory to go to a local kolkhoz and "volunteer" to harvest. As soon as he finishes the task courteously but unenthusiastically, he joins his neighborhood gang in accosting and beating up an innocent stranger who complained that they had jumped the line in the store. When he returns home from the police headquarters, he tells his overwrought crying mother that she should not worry because he will soon join the armed forces. Like Arthur, Viktor inhabits a liminal space; propelled by societal pressures that had been in place long before him, he participates in the system without feeling a true sense of belonging, hoping all along that the army might be able to integrate him into the larger collective and diminish his sense of alienation.

If war symbolized History's torture chamber for Bondarchuk's and Wajda's heroes, then contemporaneity also felt like a makeshift prison for the young working-class heroes in Reisz's and Osep'ian's productions. Like Sokolov and the Warsaw insurgents, they are held captive by forces larger than themselves and desperately try to make peace with a world that seems profoundly alien to them. They observe their parent's stagnant world and feel no connection to it. They obey because they must but also revolt from time to time in order to remind themselves—and others—that they still possess a modicum of autonomy.

Alienated Heroism: Khutsiev's and Antonioni's Heroes as Symbols of Middle-Class Angst

In many ways Marlen Khutsiev's 1966 feature *July Rain* (Iul'skii dozhd') was condemned to failure before it was even conceived although its subject appeared innocuous enough: the gradual dissolution of a romance between the twenty-seven-year-old Lena and the thirty-year-old Volodia. As Khutsiev himself commented: "Our industry has a habit of making films about budding romances and we wanted to investigate a disintegrating

relationship."[51] The director's fourth feature film, which came hard on the heels of his notorious 1962 production *Lenin's Guard*, sparked controversy because it challenged the socialist realist aesthetic and privileged the themes and filming techniques manifest in the work of French and Italian auteur filmmakers of the 1960s, such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Alain Resnais, and Federico Fellini.[52] Like his West European counterparts, Khutsiev became intrigued with how to situate the internal worlds of his protagonists at the center of the narrative and express the protagonists' psychology through visual, rather than logocentric, means.[53] Film critic N. Zorkaia praised Khutsiev in her review of the film: "On the surface of it, the story is about a young couple that breaks up for reasons not manifest in either action or dialogue. . . . But the totality of the film's visual structure—apparent in the cohesion of the atmosphere, the mood, faces, imprints of daily life, and the unrushed, even sluggish, movements of the camera—reveals the outlines of an entirely different movie."[54]

In the early 1960s grumblings had begun about this (supposedly) elitist and distinctly West European, approach to moviemaking. At the meeting of the Cinematographers' Union Organizing Committee in 1963, Ivan Pyr'ev, head of the union at the time, criticized pretentiously philosophical and purposelessly gloomy motion pictures. He argued that such movies are easy to spot: "Slow-moving gray clouds fill the screen, the rain falls incessantly, and the music drones on flatly. The takes are so inordinately long—as if their mere duration

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[51] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 522, l. 79.

[52] Khutsiev's first two motion pictures–*Spring on Zarechnaia Street* (Vesna na zarechnoi ulitse) in 1956 and *Two Fedors* (Dva Fedora) in 1959—also faced censure for their dark depictions of Soviet realities and imitation of the neorealist style.

[53] Although currently scholars treat this film as symbolically indicating, or even foreshadowing, the end of the Thaw, I believe that it is more accurate to consider *July Rain* as Khutsiev's engagement with cinematic trends evolving in Western Europe. As Khutsiev stated in his reflections on his Thaw-era oeuvre: "I never aimed to make polemical films."

[54] N. Zorkaia, "Vokrug kartiny 'Iul'skii dozd'','' *Iskusstvo kino* 2 (1968): 27-28.

would allow the viewer to glean the film's affected philosophy." The supposedly typical protagonist of such productions also comes under Pyr'ev's close scrutiny: "In this oppressive atmosphere, the hero is continually depressed. He skulks persistently in mock seriousness, and cannot, for some reason, verbalize his worries."[55] Such films, Pyr'ev insisted, contain nothing of artistic value but merely imitate the "modernist bourgeois West." He mocked "experts" who considered such sham artistry as original and innovative: "'Almost like Antonioni! No worse than Resnais!' they gush." On another occasion in 1963, a secretary of the Communist Party, L. F. Il'ichev, commented on the ideological harm these kinds of films inflict in the Cold War context: "Egomania, affectation, offensiveness, ideological flirtation with the bourgeois world, a perverted predilection for the dark and commonplace, willful neglect for the exalted and jubilant—all this is nothing short of a betrayal of our revolutionary tradition."[56] Thus, although the theme of *July Rain* could hardly be called politically sensitive, it too closely resembled the work of West European auteurs and, more importantly, depicted the Soviet microcosm as distinctly un-revolutionary. Because Khutsiev, like Antonioni or Fellini, filmed the world as a projection of the protagonist's inner anxiety, movie heroes come across as decidedly un-heroic: indecisive, impotent, and victims of their own imaginary psychoses.

In contrast to the working-class heroes of the British kitchen-sink dramas who define themselves through their deafening declarations and bravado, the middle/upper-class heroes in Antonioni's, Bergman's, Fellini's, and Resnais's films can hardly express the feelings of inadequacy and purposelessness that consume them. Additionally, because auteur directors communicate the hero's emotional world visually, the protagonist's convictions often remain

[55] I. Pyr'ev, "Tvorit s narodom dlia naroda," *Iskusstvo kino* 2 (1963): 2.

[56] RGANI, f. 2, op. 1, d. 635, l. 137.

understated, elusive, and implied; the hero rarely presents his credo declaratively as Arthur in *Saturday Night, Sunday Morning*: "I'm out for a good time. All the rest is propaganda!" Unlike the heroes of auteur dramas, the British working-class heroes never suffer disorientation; even when self-destructive, the British New Wave heroes rarely exercise debilitating self-reflection; when they do ruminate over their situation, it is usually to confirm their initial value set. Moreover, unlike the hero in Reisz's films, who believes that he can—in however small a way—shape his fate, auteur protagonists live in a world run by their phobias, of which they are unaware or unable to control.

Despite the obvious difference between the two types of heroes, Soviet critics found both views of masculinity too dark.[57] While the protagonists of British kitchen sink drama repulsed Soviet columnists with their misogyny, parochial worldview, and lack of political consciousness, they were no more enamored with Italian and French auteur work that presented masculinity as a psychological state framed by alienation and the inability to communicate with fellow man.[58] Since Soviet authorities judged Viktor in *Three Days* as an unauthentic depiction of Soviet masculinity, they could hardly be expected to greet Volodia, the protagonist of *July Rain*, with any greater measure of enthusiasm. Indeed, film critic R. Iurenev derided Khutsiev's attempt to transpose themes central to West European filmmakers into the Soviet context. He ironically remarked that the film's preoccupation with showing social gatherings and relationships void of genuine emotional connections constituted a

[57] Soviet critics were not unique in this regard. In the majority of instances Soviet commentators mirrored the insights and concerns expressed by their Western counterparts. Although most Soviet critics found Antonioni's work to be pretentious, their analysis of what Antonioni tried to accomplish accurately reflected how the Italian auteur characterized the main focus his work: an exploration of the spiritual aridity and moral coldness of modern Italian life.

[58] Although Anton Chekov's work inspired Russian directors to tackle the seeming inability of friends, lovers, spouses, parents, and children to truly communicate, Antonioni's and Khutsiev's work expressed distinctly modern-day, urban alienation.

masterfully executed but ultimately dissatisfying impersonation of West European filmmakers. Iurenev intoned ironically: "Aha! Alienation! The inability of people to communicate! *La dolce vita!* Dejection and the vexation of spirit! (*Sueta suet i tomlenie dukha!*)"[59]

Despite their acerbity, the reviewers accurately established the link between Khutsiev's work and that of Italian and French auteur filmmakers. Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that *July Rain* responds to and expands on themes and techniques Antonioni offers in his now iconic trilogy consisting of *L'avventura* (The Adventure, 1960), *La notte* (The Night, 1961), and *L'eclisse* (The Eclipse, 1962). Using the context of a romantic relationship to explore the notion of alienation in modern society, Antonioni narrates the couple's fate—or, more precisely, the story of their estrangement—by representing the contours of emotion rather than action. Moreover, Antonioni's three films contain the sort of artificial dialogue that underscores the futile search for meaningful connections. The Italian director's trilogy presents the viewer with an empty landscape, populated only by two people growing apart emotionally but desperate to reconnect physically. Of the three Italian auteur directors—Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, and Michelangelo Antonioni—it was Antonioni that made the biggest impression on Soviet critics and moviemakers. Since the showing of *L'avventura*, Antonioni established himself as a central figure in Soviet intellectual life.[60] *Cinema Art* (Iskusstvo kino) and *Soviet Screen* regularly featured reviews

[59]R. Iurenev, "Esli govorit otkrovenno: Otkrytoe pis'mo kinorezhisseru M. Khutsievu," *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, August 29, 1967, p. 3.

[60] Film critic M. Turovskaia wrote the first review of *L'avventura* and composed the first scholarly reflection on Antonioni's distinct approach to filmmaking. See "Mikelandzhelo Antonioni: Pervoe znakomstvo," *Iskusstvo kino* 6 (1962): 132-44.

and retrospectives of Antonioni's work and in 1967 cine-clubs members had an opportunity had the opportunity to watch *L'eclisse* not long after it showed in the West.

Although Antonioni's trilogy deals exclusively with the subject of a couple drifting apart or acknowledging the unbridgeable rift between them, *La notte* most closely matches the spirit of *July Rain*. Both feature a story of a pair of intellectuals—Lena/Volodia and Lidia/Giovanni—in an urban setting (Milan and Moscow). Like Antonioni, Khutsiev tells the couple's story from the heroines' point of view.[61] In either instance, women clearly recognize the decay that renders their relationship all but untenable. With quiet desperation they attempt to establish contact with their male partners who are too absorbed in their own fears to act decisively or even speak directly to the existentialist problems facing them.

Giovanni's and Volodia's lack of self-confidence affects their ability to act ethically and with conviction; they are both intellectuals who lack a moral compass and feel trapped by the societal structure that supports them and buttresses their social privilege. As intellectuals, their hallowed station in life offers them mobility and material security but denies them the freedom to speak their conscience; they are wholly beholden to the system. Giovanni, as a (moderately successful) novelist, and Volodia, as a (reasonably proficient) scientist, belong to their societies' elite stratum; they are conditioned to deference and do not have the willpower to wean themselves off the social cache they have acquired. Giovanni and Volodia become so pliant and accommodating that they lose their authenticity and, with it, their humanity.

[61] When asked about persistently casting the woman's perspective as central, Antonioni said: "It seems to me that female psychology is a finer filter for reality than male psychology. Anyway, women are less hypocritical by nature than men, therefore more interesting." Quoted in Ian Cameron, "Michelangelo Antonioni," *Film Quarterly* 16, no. 1 (1962): 41

The alienation of both Volodia and Giovanni are absolute. They have lost the connection to their soul, cannot relate to their romantic partners, and have no real friends. They are disconnected from within and without. For instance, one of Volodia's friends pays him a backhanded compliment: "He is antimagnetic, freeze-resistant, waterproof, anticorrosive, infusible, and won't combust in the Earth's atmosphere. I am not afraid for him." Volodia's apparent imperviousness to any external stimulus speaks to his inability to feel. Lena, too, wonders about who her boyfriend really is and what makes him tick. As they lie awake at night after a party, she coquettishly asks him: "You are so healthy. Have you ever been sick? If you came down with something, I could take care of you. And I've never seen you cry! Why don't you ever cry?" When they break up at the end of the film after months of courtship, Lena laments that she knows Volodia no better than she did when they started their romance. She confesses to him: "When my cousin asked me about you, I told her about your many laudable traits: kindness, sense of humor, sobriety, and devotion. If she inquires, I will not be able to explain to her why I did not get married to you."

Lena decides not to tie the knot with Volodia despite all his redeeming qualities because he hasn't a distinct character. Like a chameleon, he adapts to any environment easily since he has no ideals of his own. Although outwardly different from Viktor Chernyshev, Volodia also lacks a coherent set of guiding values but masks this lack with professional success, a respectable circle of friends, and a pleasant demeanor. He climbs the social ladder not because he is driven to succeed but because inertia commands his every move. Thus both Viktor and Volodia express a certain malaise of modern life that is characterized by a spiritual and moral numbness and evidenced by their inability to connect with even those nearest to them.

In *La notte* Antonioni introduces us to life in the posh industrial center of Milan and demonstrates that the sense of alienation is as widespread here as it is in Moscow. Antonioni focuses on a successful but insecure novelist Giovanni Pontano and his wife Lidia. The movie traces a day in the life of the couple and zeroes in on their marriage, which seems to have been over long ago. Like Lena trying to forge a bond with Volodia, Lidia continuously attempts to reestablish contact with her spouse but her efforts come to naught. Their disconnectedness is conspicuous from the very beginning since they do not speak to each other for the first twenty minutes of the film despite occupying the same space. To accentuate the distance between them visually, Antonioni avoids placing the couple in the same frame throughout the film. Moreover, the spouses rarely inhabit the same immediate space; they circle around each other in the near vicinity, as if trying to avoid addressing the unbridgeable chasm that separates them.

Antonioni makes Giovanni's feelings of isolation and imprisonment palpable all the way through the narrative. Unlike Lidia, who is filmed outdoors through much of the movie, enclosed spaces continually entrap Giovanni. Even within these interiors, Antonioni frames Giovanni within lines and grids that evoke the sensation of prison bars. At a book-signing party where Lidia clearly feels smothered, Antonioni shows her looking at her husband's portrait in a display case, symbolizing both the distance between them and how boxed-in his life has become. Although Giovanni is fully aware of his exit-less state, he cannot resist or fight it. He confesses at one point: "The way I feel, I don't know if I'll ever write again. I know what to write, but not how to write it. It's called a crisis; it's very common among writers today. But in my case, it's affecting my whole life."

Like Volodia, who calmly assents to having his name omitted from a scientific report he has written and replace it with his boss's, Giovanni also sells out his talent to a millionaire who wants him to write about his factory. Giovanni himself, clearly unhappy and unsure about what he has achieved as a writer, admits the industrialist's dominance: "Isn't writing an antiquated rather than irrepressible instinct? A lonely craftsman putting one word after another. You have the advantage of constructing your stories with real people: you create real houses, real cities—the rhythm of life, the future, is in your hands." The entrepreneur confesses self-importantly that, indeed, he has always regarded his many enterprises as works of art. Although it remains unclear whether Giovanni will sell out and become the millionaire's pet intellectual, Giovanni's refusal would suggest a disingenuous self-confidence since he himself divulges that his life "wouldn't be tolerable were it not for its distractions" and that he "no longer has inspiration but only memories."

Giovanni and Volodia are not isolated phenomena, but rather products of a morally sick milieu. Like Viktor and Arthur, whose working-class contexts determine their life's trajectory, Giovanni and Volodia cannot extract themselves from their privileged positions which, despite the comfortable lifestyle they offer, bring little satisfaction. Both Antonioni and Khutsiev take time to depict the ennui of an entire social class. Antonioni begins his film with Lidia and Giovanni visiting their friend Tommaso, who is slowly dying in the hospital. The lengthy scene featuring a contrived interaction between "friends" suggests a decaying society and culture that are being kept alive artificially. Antonioni focuses on the disingenuousness of the surroundings: the ultra-modern institution houses only beautiful "nurses" who deliver champagne to patients' rooms because of its "antidepressant properties." Tommaso himself reflects on the hypocrisy underpinning his environment:

"Hospitals are becoming more like night clubs. People want a good time to the end. Nonetheless, in my state, one craves champagne. I don't like it but have developed a passion for it." Antonioni provides a tableau of an upper class collapsing from within, choking on its postwar economic boom and its moral emptiness.

But Moscow intellectuals and socialites come off no better in Khutsiev's film. Despite the fact that the Soviet upper crust cannot revel in the same kind of wasteful displays of wealth and excessive opulence, they nonetheless resemble their Milanese counterparts in that all relationships lack any real depth. Although Khutsiev spends the great majority of the film focusing on group activities, parties, and outings, the overall impression is one of ennui. The games, the guitar-playing, and the jokes all act as a defense barrier against meaningful interactions; honesty and directness would slowly expose the bogus edifice propping up these social dealings. Film critic Iurenev observed: "During the two parties and one picnic Khutsiev shoots, we observe people who, despite disliking each other, insist on having fun together. They dance, flirt, and entertain one another without really listening or establishing any real emotional links."[62]

La notte and *July Rain* do not proscribe but rather diagnose. Khutsiev and Antonioni unambiguously depict the protagonists' deficiencies not as a demonstration of individual idiosyncrasies or a consequence of a personal history. Instead, these characters appear as products of a specific milieu, a particular historical context. These heroes do not warn about the dangers of particular life choices, but instead display the moral stupor characteristic of a shallow urban middle-class and intellectual mentalité.

[62] Iurenev, "Esli govorit otkrovenno," 4.

The Allegorical Films of the Czech New Wave or "What are you laughing at? You are laughing at yourselves!"[63]

On August 22, 1968—a day after four Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia—a curious meeting took place in the headquarters of the Cinematographers' Union. The expanded Executive Committee of the union met to adopt a resolution regarding "the events in Czechoslovakia" (*postanovlenie o sobytiiakh v Chekhoslovakii*). Without exception, those who spoke from the podium condemned the reactionary forces inside the country, approved of the military "intervention," and accused the Czechoslovak intelligentsia of abetting capitalist propaganda. Filmmakers came under particular scrutiny. Scriptwriter A. E. Novogrudskii argued that long before the Czechoslovak intelligentsia published the *Two Thousand Word Manifesto,* Czechoslovak directors produced "two thousand—if not ten thousand—film frames of emphatically antisocialist motion pictures."[64] Novogrudskii pointedly observed that such antisocialist trends occurred in plain sight; Ivan Svitak argued in the Czechoslovak journal *Film and TV News* (Filmové a Televizní Noviny) that socialist motion pictures need not have a Marxist focus. Film critic A. V. Karaganov also assessed the role of the filmmakers as crucial: "Objectively, Czechoslovak cinematography became a weapon that intensified ideological disorder and boosted the position of antisocialist forces. This process began in approximately 1962-63 and continued to the present day."[65] Film critic L. P. Pogozheva joined Karaganov's assessment by identifying anti-humanism and de-

[63] The quotation is from Nikolai Gogol's *The Inspector General*.

[64] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 4, d. 147, ll. 42-43.

[65] Ibid., 54.

heroization in Czechoslovak cinematography as the medium through which bourgeois forces exerted their nefarious influence and threatened the unity of the socialist camp.[66]

Those assembled also told numerous stories of Czechoslovak filmmakers who looked down upon the orthodox form of socialist realism and its advocates. As if conducting a postmortem, those assembled recalled the many instances of Czechoslovak defiance and arrogance. A. B. Stolper, whose *The Story of a Real Man* earned him a Stalin Prize in 1948, recalled how frequently Czechoslovak colleagues accused their Soviet counterparts of being "old-fashioned, out-of-step with current trends, orthodox etc." Stolper encouraged his audience to draw relevant lessons from the Prague events and exhorted those present "to remain maximally principled and not permit the kind of 'art for art's sake' philosophy so snobbishly propagated by the Czechs." [67] The main editor of *Soviet Screen* (Sovetskii ekran), D. S. Pisarevskii, further stoked anti-Czechoslovak sentiment, recalling an incident at an international symposium of film critics in Yugoslavia, when Czechoslovak film critic Antonín Liehm claimed that the force of contemporaneous Czechoslovak art lies in the recognition that socialism is not humanity's ideal. Pisarevskii recalled that Liehm openly rejected the writings and principles of Julius Fučík, a Czechoslovak Communist author and functionary who died in Nazi captivity and whose book *Notes from the Gallows* became obligatory school reading after 1948. Instead, Liehm declared Czechs to be "a nation of Karel Čapek and Franz Kafka."[68] Pisarevskii interpreted Liehm's statement to denote a rejection of socialist realism and an endorsement of absurdism, surrealism, and existentialist hopelessness as rendered in Čapek's and Kafka's writings.

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[66] Ibid., 22.

[67] Ibid., 17.

[68] Ibid., 33.

For all the thespian indignation at the Czechoslovak hauteur, the conservative members of the Soviet intelligentsia speaking at the August emergency meeting correctly assessed the broad outlines of a film movement that came to be known as the Czechoslovak New Wave. Lasting from approximately 1962 until the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the so-called Czechoslovak film miracle became Europe's foremost film movement because it effectively transferred the absurdity of the (modern) human condition onto the screen. Its focus on the relationship between the individual and authority/ideology/society within a Cold War framework made it all the more popular and relevant to audiences outside its borders. But its accomplishments did not stop there. Czechoslovak directors were able to build on neorealist cinema and the French New Wave to reinvent the visual possibilities of cinema. Their focus on surreal or absurdist allegory allowed Czechoslovak filmmakers to blur the difference between the real and imaginary, the possible and the abnormal. Ultimately New Wave created films which, in the words of the era's most famous cameraman Jaroslav Kučera, "pose basic questions, even if they don't answer them, and may never find the answers, and ultimately advance our knowledge of ourselves, no matter how painful that knowledge may be."[69]

This monumental film movement also popularized a new type of masculinity with deep national roots: the small man or "small Czech" (*Čecháček*) and Clueless Johnny (*Hloupý Honza*). The diminutive stature of Czechoslovak "heroes" of the New Wave—in terms of appearance, class background/education, and mental profile—had a both cultural/historical and artistic significance. Ewa Mazierska points out that truly heroic characters had little traction among Czechs, who more readily accept irony than pathos:

[69] Antonín Liehm, *Closely Watched Films: The Czechoslovak Experience* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1974), 251.

"Czechs celebrate their suffering rather than their victories: the true heroes of the Czech nation are its martyrs."[70] Adjectives that best describe the leading men of Czech film, according to Mazierska, include compliant, servile, docile, conformist, unambitous, and provincial. Petra Hanáková argues that the stereotype of the small Czech has historically persisted in the literature and the arts over the last hundred years, because the art of adaptability is his greatest asset.[71]

Irony and humor—two elements essential to Czech art and culture—have shaped the function and reception of the "small Czech" hero in specific ways. During the Czechoslovak New Wave, *hloupý Honza* became a reflection of the general society but, embarrassingly, mirrored the sides that the populace took great pains to hide. Like a Hall of Mirrors in an amusement park, the small Czech evoked laughter while at the same time showing the viewers in an unflattering light. The genius of Czech directors at the time thus lay in their ability to temper their irreverent and critical tone with humor. Daniel František suggests that irony and humor in general are the weapon of the powerless, and that this connection largely explains why both these elements are so common in Czechoslovak films and culture at large. Devoid of political power, the inhabitants of Czechoslovak lands used it as a way to come to terms with their diminutive position. Various authors argue that the presence of irony distinguishes Czechoslovak cinema from cinemas of other countries of the region, most importantly Polish and Hungarian.[72]

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[70] Ewa Mazierska, *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 33.

[71] Petra Hanáková, "The Construction of Normality: The Lineage of Male Figures in Contemporary Czech Cinema," in Uta Röhrborn, ed. *Mediale Welten in Tschechien nach 1898: Genderkonstructionen und Codes des Plebejismus* (Munich: Kubon and Sagner), 152-55.

[72] Daniel František, "The Czech Difference," in David W. Paul, ed. *Politics, Art, and Commitment in the East European Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 49-56.

Indeed, unlike Wajda who depicted his characters as (symbolically) coming in direct contact with historical forces, the protagonists of, for instance, Pavel Juráček's, Jan Němec's, and Miloš Forman's films, cast their characters in an absurd or allegorical universe in which concrete historical forces are absent. Like Italian neorealists, Czechoslovak New Wave directors filmed their unassuming heroes in their natural environment performing seemingly everyday activities such as chasing an elusive paper trail in the bureaucratic machine, pursuing a love interest, or attending social functions. Juráček fittingly summarized the attitude of the movement in a July 1968 interview: "One day I realized that there are moments when noble historical events can go to hell, because there are other things—human, personal, private things—that frequently are more important and essential. You can't forget them or brush them aside the way you can the others."[73] Unlike the neorealist universe, in Czechoslovak films things are rarely what they seem; the superficially ordinary activities reveal greater and more profound meaning. Like in auteur films of Fellini or Antonioni, the objects, dialogue, and casual glances construct an emotional atmosphere which defines, and in many instances constitutes, the narrative. Moreover, like Fellini, Czech directors used the realm of the fantastical—daydreams, nightmares, and visions—to project the hero's idiosyncratic perspective. Thus the Czechoslovak New Wave blended elements of neorealism and Italian auteur cinema, focusing on the mundane with a highly subjective vision of its protagonists.[74]

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[73] Antonín Liehm, *Closely Watched Films: The Czechoslovak Experience* (White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press, 1974), 312.

[74] Although the Czechoslovak New Wave had a unique aesthetic vision that propelled it to international fame, it also possessed a distinct sociopolitical dimension. Like the British Free Cinema movement, the Czechoslovak New Wave directors stood up for two specific kinds of freedom: the freedom from ideological constraints and, relatedly, the freedom to choose subjects that interested them as artists.

Although symbolic like the films of the Polish Film School, the Czechoslovak New Wave directors shied away from making pronouncements about larger historical events. Even films that focus on the Second World War—such as Alfréd Radok's *Long Road* (Daleká cesta), Jan Němec's *Diamonds of the Night* (Démanty noci), Jiří Menzel's *Closely Watched Trains* (Ostře sledované vlaky), and Ján Kadár's and Elmar Klos's *The Shop on Main Street* (Obchod na korze)—place as much emphasis on depicting universal human foibles (cowardice, passivity, insecurity, and irrationality) as they do on wartime activities. Unlike Polish films, in which the nation and Polishness loom large, Czech directors avoid the figure of the "mad patriot" and privilege the civilian perspective and also cast Jews in main roles. Thus in contrast to Wajda's 1950s trilogy, which owes a part of its emotional power to a moving depiction of a national tragedy, the films of the Czechoslovak New Wave captivate as universally applicable statements on human nature.[75]

No less important in this context is Jaroslav Hašek's literary creation—the *Good Soldier Švejk*—which has embodied the national attitude toward war in the Czech lands since the early 1920s. Josef Švejk, who finds mongrel dogs and sells them off as pedigrees in his civilian life to make an income, engenders great angst in the army ranks since his superiors often view his idiocy as cleverly disguised attempts of subversion and/or attempts to avoid military service. Moreover, neither he nor his Austro-Hungarian superiors labor under the pretense that soldiers generally volunteer to sacrifice themselves in the name of the homeland, the Kaiser, or national pride. Instead of glorifying war and sacrifice, the majority of the plot revolves around Švejk (accidentally) undermining the enormous bureaucratic military machine and the inefficient army leadership. This characteristically Švejk-ian

[75] This situation is due to a certain extent to the fact that the Second World War in Czechoslovakia proved less brutal and that the level of compromise with the Nazi authorities was much greater.

antiheroism infuses not only films set in wartime but also permeates productions on contemporary themes since Švejk prizes compromise and evasion over taking a principled stand *à la* the Polish mad patriot. Thus Švejkovina (or Švejkism) has become "a concept which characterizes the passive form of Czech resistance against a superior power, which involves conformism, moral laxity, and unheroic 'realism'."[76]

The combination of featuring Švejkian characters and surreal/absurd/allegorical context frequently sounded alarm bells for the conservative elements of the Soviet and Czechoslovak political and cultural authorities, who interpreted these films as thinly veiled attacks on communist authority. New Wave movies not only contradicted socialist realist principles, they also raised questions about the nature of power, violence, and morality. Such trends, however, proved difficult to stop not only because these motion pictures played a central role in the dissident movement (as Soviet officials correctly asserted), but also because they aptly encapsulated a national tradition and tapped into finely tuned cultural sensibilities.[77] As directors Jiří Menzel bluntly put it in the spring of 1968: "everything about us, and things that represent us, display a sense of humor. It's not inherited, this humor of ours. It has been forced upon us, because if you don't have a sense of humor, you can't

[76] Mazierska, *Masculinities*, 35.

[77] Since the 1930s, the Czechs won global recognition for both cinematic experimentation and entertainment. The cinema that emerged between the two wars remains unique in its artistic perspective: the Czechs blended the dark moods of the German Expressionists with the disorientingly quick editing styles of the Soviet avant-garde, adding a good measure of Hollywood glamour and Surrealist dream imagery. In contrast to other Eastern Bloc countries, the Czechoslovaks possessed well-preserved film studios. In addition to the state-of-the-art facilities, which had been built in the 1930s, the Czech intelligentsia distinguished itself in numbers and the enthusiasm with which artists approached filmmaking: ten feature films were produced in 1946 and eighteen in the two subsequent years. Moreover, as František Daniel notes, "for eight decades there has been a close relationship between film and the other arts—literature, theater, music, and painting—and this has been clearly expressed in the cinema, both before the Second World War and after the war, when it is practically impossible to name a prominent writer or composer or artist who has not been involved in moviemaking," See Daniel František, "The Czech Difference," in David W. Paul, ed. *Politics, Art, and Commitment in the East European Cinema* (London: Macmillan, 1983), 52.

possibly live in Czechoslovakia."[78] Thus this humor—sometimes acerbically and sometimes compassionately ironic—openly ridiculed and undercut the serious political and educational role officials expected socialist masculinity to play. This mockery of men reared by the socialist system constituted sacrilege and only the historical specificity of the Prague Spring movement made the appearance of such irreverent heroes possible.

Celebrated director Oldrich Lipský's science fiction film *Man from the First Century* (Muz z prvního století) constituted a precursor to other Czechoslovak New Wave films that resorted to allegory to mock the Czechoslovak national character and cast doubt on the human capacity for reason. The film begins in 1961 when the inane upholsterer Joseph, who is in charge of padding the country's latest space rocket, accidently flips the take-off switch and launches himself into space without anyone else on board. He comes back home in the year 2447 with Adam, an alien companion who wants to explore the human race. Adam and Joseph witness a peaceful and bountiful planet inhabited by an enlightened and contented populace. The population's high quality of life is best reflected when one character declares: "Every now and then I like to cut up an onion to remember what it feels like to cry." The residents of Earth have evolved so much that they dub Joseph "the man from the first century." Although they find his knowledge about the world charmingly antiquated (for example, upon arriving and witnessing the material abundance, he asks: "Is this the West? Or East?), they recoil at his barely concealed greed, slothfulness, and philistinism.

Lipský's "man from the first century" demonstrates the mental and moral unpreparedness of the contemporary Czechoslovak citizen for a utopian future but also implicitly mocks the socialist authorities for raising and nurturing this type of personality—or for being unable to reeducate the Josephs of the world. When Joseph's hosts present him

[78] Liehm, *Closely Watched Films*, 305.

with a machine that instantly delivers anything a person requests from the "universal citizens' catalogue," the not-so-noble savage goes mad with greed. Unable to restrain his materialism, Joseph begins tearing pages from the catalog and feeding them frantically into the futuristic contraption. Within moments the room becomes overcrowded with myriad packages containing needless products. Even a giraffe—the ultimate symbol of unbridled consumerist impulse—appears as one of Joseph's "necessities." Joseph's guide, incredulous at the spectacle, wonders aloud: "Why would anyone need this much stuff?" On the one hand, Joseph's avarice represents a clear condemnation of avarice and as such supports the state's enlightenment mission. On the other hand, the spectacle also demonstrates how miserably the socialist order failed in producing upstanding citizens who could shoulder the responsibilities of a utopian society. Implicit here is also the typical Thaw-era critique of the Communist Party's obsession with technological progress and relative negligence of man's spiritual development.

As the citizens of Earth grow weary of their unexpected visitor, Joseph—in a move typical of a small-time bureaucrat determined to hang on to his petty privileges—begins to ascribe to himself qualities and skills he does not possess in order to keep his hosts' attention. For instance, he states that his cranial capacity is equal to the most advanced computer system they possess. Once this hoax falls through, "the man from the first century" attempts to curry favor with his hosts through fear. He warns the earthlings that Adam, his alien companion, plans to destroy humankind. When the fear-mongering also fails, Joseph realizes that his cover is up and makes a hasty retreat to his rocket. As he leaves the future society, the narrator warns the viewer: "Look out, people! He's coming back to *you*!" This rather bleak assessment of human potential for improvement and progress represented

Czechoslovakia in Cannes in 1962. And while the Czech national tradition could comfortably accommodate the "small Czech" exposing the absurdity of sociopolitical systems and the human condition, the Soviet experiment had little tolerance for bizarre juxtapositions, meaningless situations, and pure nonsense.

The case of E. Riazanov's 1961 comedy *A Man from Nowhere* (Chelovek niotkuda) represented a retreat from the Stalinist musical comedy and marked an end to any experimentation with the genre. In his memoirs, Riazanov refers to his film as "comical un-science fiction" (*komicheskaia nenauchnaia fantastika*) and notes that this was the first motion picture in the history of Soviet filmmaking where absurdist humor informed the entire production. As Riazanov soberly observes, however, the highly publicized ideological persecution of *Man from Nowhere* sounded a death knoll for an entire trend in film comedy.[79]

The film begins with a group of Russian anthropologists in search of a legendary Tapi tribe in a distant mountain range. The protagonist, Vladimir Porazhaev, accidentally falls through a small mountain crevasse and finds himself among the mythical Tapis. The cannibalistic clan wants to eat him because he speaks in prosaic "rhythms" instead of blank verse, but the idealistic scientist manages to escape certain death with one of the tribe's members, whom everyone refers to as Screwball (*Chudak*). The enthusiastic anthropologist takes "the savage" back to a Moscow of a not-too-distant future where pandemonium ensues as Screwball runs amok, learning how to be "human." The cannibal enters a running race and easily beats the competition, attends a theater performance where he attempts to catch and eat the actor playing the villain, and tries to win the attention of certain Olia in outlandish ways.

[79] Riazanov discusses the entire episode of the film's official banishment in his autobiography. See El'dar Riazanov, Nepodvedennye itogi (Moscow: Vagrius, 2005), 122-137.

The humor in this gaff-filled comedy of errors revolves not so much on Screwball's mistaken identity, but because the pastiche of situations is tied only by the caveman's eccentricities.

During the course of Screwball's frenzied sojourn the young scientist attempts to teach the savage cannibal how to be "human" and impress core Soviet values on the uncivilized barbarian from the fictional Tapi tribe. For instance, while flying over Moscow in a (then readily available) helicopter taxi, Vladimir shows the Yeti a symmetrical, highly structured, and seemingly unending cityscape as proof of his civilization's brains and brawn. In a couple of instances he pontificates on the virtue of hard labor: "It has been scientifically proven that those who do not work revert back to monkeys," and "He who does not work is not a human being."

Despite the obvious positive reflections on the Soviet order, the officials in the Cultural Department of the Central Committee complained that "certain episodes contain ideologically suspect undertones that imply that the savage is morally better than the people he encounters in our own time." But the rebuke did not stop there. In 1961 the Cultural Department of the CPSS Central Committee protested the release of E. Riazanov's film. The two high-ranked officials in the cultural department who wrote the report, D. Polikarpov and V. Baskakov, rather dramatically accused the film: "for compromising our cinematography in the eyes of the public, for at its very core, being inimical to the principles and traditions of Soviet art, and for essentially leading to the disintegration and destruction of film as an art form."[80] As late as 1964, when the Ideological Commission of the Central Committee met with the members of the country's largest film studio to discuss how to enhance the effectiveness of the industry's propagandistic mission, *Man from Nowhere* remained Mosfil'm's *enfant terrible*. The ideological commission criticized Riazanov's film severely:

[80] RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 138, ll. 7-8.

"In a number a cases directors and cameramen make uncritical use of techniques characteristic of modernist bourgeois art and make allowances for formalistic gimmickry (*triukachestvo*), both of which weaken the film's educational properties. *Man from Nowhere*, more than other productions, suffers from these weaknesses."[81]

What the highest Soviet authorities found problematic about Riazanov's film—and what they protested against so vociferously during the Prague Spring—is the seemingly frivolous way in which allegorical surrealism conceptualizes the historical position of the socialist realist hero. While socialist realism extols individual protagonists as symbols of History's inevitable march toward communism, surrealism turns the notion of human agency and historical progress on its head. Since the hero finds himself in worlds that do not operate according to rational laws, he no longer exerts control over his destiny and becomes a prisoner of chance. No more than alienated/angry heroes in the British New Wave or Antonioni's films, protagonists in absurdist and surreal productions can hardly pretend to command their own lives, let alone shape the nature of historical progress.

Conclusion

One of the most striking scenes of Sergei Gerasimov's 1967 film *Journalist* (Zhurnalist) features a polite but contentious conversation between the French actress Annie Girardot, Gerasimov himself, and Soviet actress Tamara Makarova. Seated at a bistro in Brussels, Gerasimov and Makarova, two giants of the socialist realist tradition, commence an after-dinner conversation about whether movies replete with images of graphic violence and human depravity serve a social purpose and provide (moral) direction to the average viewer.

[81] E.S. Afanas'eva, V. Iu. Afiani, et. al., comp. *Ideologicheskie komissii TsK KPSS, 1958-1964: Dokumenty* (Moscow: Rosspen, 1998), 469.

They try to convince Girardot—the face of Italian and French avant-garde cinema during the 1960s—that art ought to celebrate the positive sides of human existence and emphasize human potential.[82] Girardot, however, endorses art's responsibility to depict all aspects of human character—however disheartening they might be. She points out that a film industry dedicated only to commemorating man's promise for greatness produces an incomplete view of the world and human nature. As if citing from a socialist realist workbook, Gerasimov responds that the depiction of man's darker sides lacks any educational benefits and instead serves a purely commercial function. To prove his point, he hypothetically asks Girardot why she agrees to play heroines whose life choices she cannot subscribe to: "Today you performed beautifully, playing an angst-ridden woman at a crossroads who eventually takes her own life. Let me ask you a question. Do you want such a fate for yourself?" Although Girardot comments that she would not want to experience her heroine's psychological breakdown, she argues that intense passions and emotions—however dark—can bring an audience member closer to enlightenment and self-awareness. Makarova takes up Girardot's defense of existentialist angst by noting the limitations to such an approach to art. The Soviet actress points out that because audiences inevitably become accustomed to horrific scenes, they come to expect ever more shocking material, which eventually leads to a psychosis. Like an addict, the viewer gradually demands more frequent and stronger doses of macabre scenes he has come to expect. The Soviet actress concludes the conversation with a somber

[82] On a symbolic level, Annie Girardot was ideal for this conversation because she starred in Luchino Visconti's 1960 motion picture *Rocco and His Brothers* (Rocco e suoi fratelli), shocking for its graphic and gut-wrenching scenes of violence and murder. Girardot's character—the prostitute Nadia—is in the centre of two explicitly sadistic scenes, shocking for their realism. In the rape scene, we see Nadia surrounded by a gang of men, a terrified, defenseless figure screaming simultaneously for mercy and help. In the following scene Nadia's rapist stabs her to death; he delivers several deadly blows in a fit of passion and desperation as she crawls on the frozen ground, crying out, "I don't want to die!"

thought: “Ultimately, a psychotic man cannot differentiate between beauty and unsightliness. He is sick.”

This quasi-documentary exchange over after-dinner drinks aptly encapsulates the debate that raged in Soviet art circles since the late 1950s and centered on the (deleterious) effects of postwar European cinematography on socialist realism. Having discredited the Stalinist aesthetic, Soviet reformist filmmakers faced the challenge of reassessing the nature and role of art in a post-Stalinist order. In this respect they joined their European colleagues who were also in the process of reinventing both postwar popular attitudes toward artistic and moral systems. In the process of finding new ways to express a more ambiguous attitude about the nature of the world and man’s place in it, a portion of Soviet intellectuals joined a pan-European conversation about the meaning of human existence. Like their colleagues in the West, reform-oriented Soviet filmmakers began to experiment with cinematic conventions and debate how to best relay man’s precarious and ambiguous position within a postwar, Cold War context.

Although Soviet filmmakers occasionally succeeded in promoting films that challenged the socialist realist dogma, party authorities equally as frequently limited the distribution of motion pictures whose “message” seemed ambiguous/subversive due to “alien” aesthetic principles. Conservative forces consistently attacked films that lacked a positive perspective, eschewed a sequential narrative, developed stories without a clear-cut optimistic conclusion, and featured a flawed anti-hero. Party ideologues saw these aesthetic choices as anti-humanistic. Moreover, these detractors liked to repeat Khrushchev’s own mantra regarding peaceful coexistence: “peaceful coexistence in the field of ideology is tantamount to treason.”

Because European postwar skepticism cast doubt on rationalism and meaning behind the human condition, it found itself at loggerheads with Soviet humanism, which based its legitimacy on the claim that socialist societies (under the guidance of the Communist Party) can conquer nature, establish equitable relations among men, and perfect the human personality. After the Twentieth and Twenty-second Party Congresses in particular, the party amplified its call to artists to restore the socialist project's popular standing and reestablish truth, freedom, and reason as the governing principles of the post-Stalin era. Party authorities demanded that Soviet intellectuals challenge postmodernist cinema since it supposedly encouraged cynicism regarding objective reality, social morals, and societal norms.

Conversations across the European continent about the role of cinema as a sociopolitical institution and as an art form dovetailed the debates about the human condition and found their way into Soviet intellectual circles. The dynamic artistic innovation and postwar cynicism that defined European art throughout the 1950s and 1960s profoundly affected those Soviet directors who intended to reconceptualize the Stalinist approach to filmmaking. After Stalin's death, reformist intelligentsia found ways to incorporate the notes of postmodern skepticism in their own work. By changing the way they depicted the world in which the hero operated, moviemakers automatically reformulated the scope of the hero's action.

Deheroization, therefore, concerned itself less with the protagonist's appearance and the scale of his accomplishments and instead focused on the nature of the world around him. Because of their apparent inability to express unambiguous enthusiasm for the present or optimism for the future, Khrushchev-era heroes became an ideological liability to a regime obsessed with achieving communism by 1980. If the quintessential Stalinist hero operated in

an orderly world as an integrated member of the collective, the archetypal Khrushchev-era un-hero felt alienated from society and struggled to find a sense of direction and greater meaning in a volatile microcosm. Buoyed by de-Stalinization, the reformist intelligentsia promoted these dubious heroes to question principles central to Stalinist culture and art: positivism, empiricism, and rationalism. By reconsidering both the understanding of human nature and the field of action in which the hero's life occurred, artists were seen to be making a comment on the failure of the Soviet system to secure its citizens with a bright future.

Official pressures notwithstanding, the reformist intelligentsia successfully exploited the authorities' aspiration for global recognition to produce ideologically suspect films that would be tolerated for their promise to garner international renown and establish Soviet cinema as a cultural force with which to be reckoned.[83] Soviet critic L. P. Pogozheva best expressed the paradox Soviet filmmakers faced when she proclaimed that the Soviet art establishment should be dedicated to carefully managing its own public image if it expected to sway attitudes abroad. "We must win over world opinion," argued Pogozheva, "since the eyes of the progressive world are on us."[84] The Soviet authorities thus expected the impossible: to promote socialist realism in a way that would win awards in Cannes, Venice, San Francisco, and Berlin without, however, adapting socialist realism to changing international aesthetic and philosophical trends.

Nonetheless, as the films analyzed above demonstrate, the reformist intelligentsia intermittently managed to create a space for non-Soviet philosophical currents and aesthetic

[83] *Forty-first*, *The Cranes are Flying*, *Ballad of a Soldier*, *Ivan's Childhood*, *Nine Days of a Year*, and *Lenin's Guard*, all won prizes abroad and departed from the strict interpretations of socialist realism, establishing a unique perspective on Soviet realities.

[84] RGALI, f. 2936, op. 1, d. 123, l. 61. Pogozheva directed her comments at V. A. Kochetov, a conservative writer and editor of the conformist journal *Oktiabr'*, who argued that the artistic intellectuals should completely disregard the commentary coming from abroad. He insisted that criticism from the bourgeois camp indicated the socialist camp's relative level of success.

trends. The attitude M. Romm expressed at the All-Russian Theatrical Society (*Vserossiiskoe teatral'noe obshchestvo*) in 1962 explains the determination (and success) the reformist directors had in creating films that challenged the tenets of socialist realism: "We have become accustomed to thinking that nothing of merit happens in the West. This attitude is curious considering that Russia once distinguished itself internationally by its unequaled translations of world literature. The Russian intelligentsia was once world-renowned as being unrivaled in its knowledge of world culture. This is also one of our traditions and we should celebrate it."[85]

[85] Mikhail Romm, *Kak v kino: Ustnye rasskazy* (Moscow: Dekom, 2003), 219.

Conclusion

Between Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 and the USSR's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Soviet politicians and filmmakers engaged in heated debates over what kinds of movie heroes should be allowed on the country's movie screens. These debates exemplified the regime's anxieties regarding the country's post-Stalinist future. Following N.S. Khrushchev's "secret speech" at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956, the notion of heroism and masculinity changed radically. As Khrushchev sought to distance himself from Stalin's repressive legacy, he demanded that filmmakers reject the Stalinist heroes who zealously dedicated their muscled bodies to mining tons of coal in a single shift or conquering the Arctic in the dead of winter. As a populist, Khrushchev insisted that movies reflect actual conditions. The more modest film protagonists who drank, engaged in extramarital affairs, slept on the job, and occasionally defied the authorities consequently became poster boys for the liberalization of the communist system.

Just as previous political programs of the Communist Party (such as the First Five-Year Plan and the attendant Stakhanovites who ardently over-fulfilled production norms), the Thaw required a distinctive image to be associated with its changing political direction. The problem, however, lay in the fact that there was no consensus on how the revamped image of the New Soviet Man ought to look. Many contemporary movie directors and scriptwriters were left wondering: if Stalinist heroes were "too good to be true," just how "good" could the male protagonists be before they crossed the line into "too good" or "not good enough"?

Celluloid heroism thus demonstrated the central role gender representations played vis-à-vis the political project of de-Stalinization and Khrushchev's Thaw in general.

Reformist filmmakers seized on Khrushchev's de-Stalinization drive to promote ambiguous masculine protagonists who marked a clear departure from the Stalinist system and the epic heroes it promoted. While the Stalinist hero embodied an ideal socialist type rather than an individual fate, Thaw-era protagonists marked the reformist directors' efforts to promote individualized personalities and the intricacies of human psychology. Conservative officials, however, sought to censor the new heroes as too soft for the intensifying Cold War competition. Anxious about the unpredictable consequences of Khrushchev's many initiatives—denouncing Stalin's personality cult, opening up the country's borders to the outside world, increasing the autonomy of the mass media, and pledging to achieve communism by 1980—the party apparatchiks linked the country's volatile state of affairs to the harmful effects of Hamlet-like film heroes; they argued that these moody and indecisive movie characters inadequately expressed the socialist system's superiority and unsatisfactorily communicated the correct values and principles to Soviet audiences. The hard-line forces contended that if the USSR was to overtake the United States and mobilize the populace in this effort, it needed Stalin-era supermen. Therefore, the debates about cinematic masculinity revealed a system struggling to maintain its authority in the face of liberalization.

The Communist Party's inability to control depictions of gender eroded its capacity to dictate the country's vision of the future. At the same time, the reformist intelligentsia frequently found itself ill-equipped to disarm their conservative opponents. Each of the chapters showcased how the reformist filmmakers successfully exploited the era's temporary

liberalization to construct an alternative masculine archetype while simultaneously struggling to advance their agenda without either alienating the average moviegoer or unnecessarily affronting the party powerbrokers. The balancing act involved in creating a post-Stalinist masculine ideal aptly reveals the period's overall dynamism and divisiveness.

The sacrosanct authority of the iconoclastic Stalinist patriarch came under attack as a result of de-Stalinization; just as Khrushchev undermined Stalin's benevolent image, reformist directors challenged the figure of the ever-wise father-figure who led his young protégées to political consciousness. The hierarchical bond that defined homosocial relationships in Stalinist culture changed substantively during the Thaw as children, adolescents, and youth became models for adults. The period's movies extolled the authenticity and innocence of boys and young men who often served as a corrective to their imperfect seniors, their supposed examples. Although the authorities initially accepted the films' (implied) skepticism about the ability of the patriarch to direct his charges, by the mid-1960s Khrushchev himself opposed any kind of revision of the father-son trope, fearing that even a symbolic inversion of hierarchical positions in film invited a questioning of (political) authority in general. The state therefore protested the depiction of inverted generational relations, perceiving them as advocating and legitimizing an overall disregard for the old-guard Bolsheviks and the power of the Communist Party in general. While reformist filmmakers defended themselves by arguing that their works reflects the state's prerogative to fight the remnants of Stalin's personality cult (such as uncritical obedience to higher-ups), they faced an uphill battle after Khrushchev's ouster in 1964.

As reformist moviemakers temporarily ceased relying exclusively on patriarchal imagery to define the masculine experience, they self-consciously shied away from the

aggressive, bellicose rhetoric typical of Stalinist masculinity. Instead, films placed female protagonists as catalysts for change and symbols of redemption. Reformist directors utilized heroines and their femininity to demonstrate ways in which the post-Stalinist state valued individual perspective and initiative. The most controversial films of the period—such as *Clear Skies*, *Forty-first*, and *The Cranes Are Flying*—featured heroines whose fate advanced the notion that individuals who lack the empathy and the desire to better others' lives cannot be productive community members. The feminine ideal exemplified Khrushchev's populist position that persuasion is the optimal form of agitation. The newfound appreciation for the stereotypically feminine virtues also reflected on celluloid masculinity by making men's happiness dependent on their ability to create and sustain personal and romantic relationships. However, such a persistent focus on emotions and family life caused anxiety in some circles. Conservative art critics and party functionaries saw such films as too preoccupied with *petit bourgeois* trivialities and divorced from the needs of the Soviet state during a period of heightening Cold War tensions. Although celluloid heroes became increasingly less demonstrably emotive in the latter part of the Thaw, some of the most popular motion pictures after 1968 remained focused on the trials and tribulations of romantic relationships.

Scientists and engineers championed the reformist intelligentsia's agenda since they embodied both moral empathy characteristic of the era's celluloid heroines and the spirit of youthful irreverence toward authority. Reformist filmmakers exploited the official patronage and large-scale popularity of physicists, mathematicians, and cyberneticists in order to present their vision of a masculine ideal in the form of a brainiac who defends the laws of science against ideological meddling while demonstrating that technical progress is pointless

"if it breaks man down." In the age of atomic energy and space travel, however, party officials disapproved of filmmakers who represented scientists as anything but stalwart defenders of the notion that science can solve all of the country's problems. Since the CPSU presented itself as the champion of progress through scientific innovation, party officials cast aspersions on directors who presented state officials as unqualified to intervene in scientific affairs and who insinuated that science without ethics means little. Despite the fact that heroes who expressed a qualified optimism for human progress slowly receded from the nation's screens, the image of the quixotic, idealistic scientist remained alive in the minds of many dissidents who staunchly defended human rights and individual freedoms in subsequent decades.

The reemergence of sociology substantively shaped the way in which moviemakers and party members discussed the changing contours of Soviet masculinity outlined above. First, since sociological research revealed the complexity and diversity of Soviet society, reformist directors could diversify depictions of masculinity and validate their unorthodox heroes as based in the multifaceted social realities of contemporaneous life. Second, as sociological research regained official support in the late 1950s, it effectively put an end to an exclusively ideologically-centered conceptualization of masculinity and facilitated an evaluation of masculinity based on audience preference and feedback. Once an actual statistical moviegoer replaced the imagined and ideologically sanitized spectator, reformist filmmakers had an easier time arguing for their problematic protagonists. An increased focus on empirical sociological research, however, also produced negative side-effect as it weakened the filmmakers' claim that they represented the voice of the people and that their motion pictures reflected popular sentiment. The popularity of foreign imports, such as *The*

Magnificent Seven, manifest in skyrocketing ticket sales and ample sociological data, gave ammunition to conservative art critics to paint the works of reformist directors as lacking mass appeal.

In addition to claiming that Thaw-era heroes could not match the allure of American cowboys and French musketeers, party officials concurrently objected to de-Stalinized masculinity on the grounds that it mirrored existentialist heroes typical of European postmodern existentialism. "New Waves" in East and West European cinema defined man's condition in dark or absurdist overtones. Although Soviet reformist directors did not reproduce European trends, they resembled them in the sense that cinemas across the continent strove to dissociate themselves from the conservative film industries of the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s.

As a new cohort of Italian, British, Polish, and Czechoslovak filmmakers reinvented their national cinema traditions, a rising generation of Soviet directors also sought to rethink and revise the socialist realist approach to art. Like their European contemporaries, Soviet moviemakers were inspired by Italian neorealism to move away from glamorized and sanitized depictions of reality. Although these New Waves differed in both philosophy and artistic approach, they all politicized and expanded the possibilities of the film form. New Wave experiments often posed a direct challenge to the reigning artistic and political status quo: the British New Wave challenged the reigning establishment with its belligerent working-class heroes; Italian auteur directors evoked an impressionistic reality inhabited by self-consciously lifeless protagonists; the Polish Film School created romanticized heroes doomed to failure; and Czechoslovak New Wave filmmakers mocked human folly by featuring inept protagonists in absurdist situations. For their part, Soviet reformist directors

adopted "sincerity" as their mantra and extracted socialist heroes from a stable, knowable, and conquerable cosmos. Although conservative forces successfully limited the development of a distinct Soviet New Wave, the state's desire to compete successfully in the international film festival circuit secured a limited number of directors the chance to create film heroes who challenged classic socialist realist archetypes.

The reformist intelligentsia's attempts to promulgate a new vision of the socialist project after Stalin's death faced increasing pressures after the Khrushchev's ouster in 1964. On February 14, 1966, sixteen months after L. I. Brezhnev became General Secretary of the CPSU and sixteen months before Soviet tanks rolled into Prague, twenty-five preeminent members of the scientific and artistic intelligentsia sent Brezhnev a letter protesting attempts to rehabilitate Stalin.[1] Prompted by rumors that the neo-Stalinists in the Soviet leadership pushed for Stalin's rehabilitation at the 1966 Twenty-third Party Congress, the document rejected even a partial relegitimization of Stalin's legacy. [2] The country's leading scientists, artists, writers, and filmmakers argued that a defense of Stalin's crimes would violate the trust citizens had in the CPSU and impair the Soviet Union's international prestige. The signatories included directors Grigorii Chukhrai, Marlen Khutsiev, and Mikhail Romm since their films played a major role in overturning key aspects of Stalinist rule and helped define the Thaw era. Although the Brezhnev leadership never officially restored Stalin's personality

[1] A month later, on March 25, 1966, another thirteen members of the scientific-technical and creative intelligentsia wrote the Presidium of the Community Party to express support with the original letter and signatories. Both letters were shared with the foreign press. See documents no. 10 and no. 13 in Andrei Artizov, ed., *Reabilitatsiia: Kak eto bylo; Dokumenty Prezidiuma TsK KPSS i drugie materialy*, vol. 2, *Fevral' 1956–nachalo vos'midesiatykh godov* (Moscow: Materik, 2003).

[2] Sergei Khrushchev noted that his retired father became so distressed over the idea of rehabilitating Stalin that he began to write an expose of Stalinism, which eventually evolved into Khrushchev's memoirs. Nikita Khrushchev thought that Brezhnev insisted on Stalin's rehabilitation because he wanted to be seen as occupying the armchair of "the most brilliant leader of all times and peoples" rather than the restless "corn promoter" (*kukuruznik*). See Sergei Khrushchev, ed., *Memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev*, vol. 1, *Commissar: 1918-1945* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2004), 715-16.

cult to its former glory,[3] it nonetheless both repressed those who spoke openly against the memory of the Great Leader and made clear overtures to re-sanctify Stalin's place in history.

One did not have to look far to identify Stalin's partial restitution. Historian Mark Sandle notes that the Brezhnev leadership aimed to restore Stalin's public image as a great military leader and therefore devoted "massive amounts of energy and paper to re-falsifying the role of Stalin in the victory over Hitler." Moreover, because Khrushchev publicly condemned Stalin's disastrous handling of the Second World War in his secret speech, "the Twentieth Party Congress was virtually written out of the annual CPSU histories produced in the 1970s."[4] Grigorii Chukhrai's 1961 film *Clear Skies* also fell victim to this campaign since it portrayed postwar Stalinism in unambiguously unflattering colors and depicted "the Gardener of Human Happiness" as a tyrant. Even though Chukhrai was a party member and despite the fact that the motion picture won the Grand Prix at the 1961 International Moscow Film Festival, it disappeared from movie screens and television programs virtually overnight.[5] The authorities applied the same kind of pressure on Soviet literary life in 1970 when they removed Aleksandr Tvardovskii from his position as editor of *Novyi Mir* and replaced him with the neo-Stalinist party hack Mikhail Suslov. By repressing the journal that secured the publication of A. Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* and I. Ehrenburg's *The Thaw*, the regime not only dismantled the reformist intelligentsia's most trusted platform but also struck at an important symbol of de-Stalinization. Lacking a public

[3] R. Medvedev argues that the official rehabilitation never took place because the leadership of the Polish, Hungarian, and Italian Communist Parties refused to take part. See R. Medvedev, *On Soviet Dissent* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 26-28.

[4] Edwin Bacon and Mark Sandle, eds., *Brezhnev Reconsidered* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 150.

[5] Valerii Golovskoi, *Kinematograf semidesiatykh: Mezhdu ottepel'iu i glasnost'iu* (Moscow: Materik, 2004), 124.

outlet for alternative ideas, the intelligentsia increasingly turned to dissident self-publishing (*samizdat*) to air views incompatible with official doctrine.[6]

The movie industry fared no better than the literary establishment. Although the Stalin-era "film famine" did not recur and the studios averaged 130 films yearly, the reformist filmmakers' autonomy became a shadow of its former self. Valerii Golovskoi, who worked as an editor in the journals *The Art of Cinema* (*Iskusstvo kino*) and *Soviet Screen* (Sovetskii ekran) between 1965 and 1980, reflected unenthusiastically on the state of cinema between 1968 and 1985[7]: "The regime determinedly and ruthlessly stifled any sign of non-conformism (*inakomyslie*). . . . Even when the big screen featured contentious, unorthodox films, it was, more often than not, a result of bureaucratic oversight, clever manipulation of antagonisms between party and governmental apparatuses, or simply the artist's intractability."[8] Echoing Golovskoi's sentiments, historian George Faraday notes that the Brezhnev regime renewed the emphasis on ideological and aesthetic orthodoxy, actively promoting compliant directors and marginalizing dissenting ones, placing approximately sixty heterodox films "on the shelf" between 1967 and 1985.[9]

The weakening of the industry's independence began in 1969 with a party resolution making film studio editors directly responsible for the films they produced. Realizing that the party's and government's central organs could logistically not oversee the production of over a hundred films a year, the CPSU Central Committee shifted the burden onto the more

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[6] Although *samizdat* publications existed under Khrushchev, they proliferated under Brezhnev even as the regime applied sharper measures against such dissident activities.

[7] Golovskoi emigrated to the United States in 1981.

[8] Golovskoi, *Kinematograf semidesiatykh*, 353.

[9] See G. Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers: The Struggle for Artistic Autonomy and the Fall of the Soviet Film Industry* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 2000), 87.

numerous and eager cadres of studio executives. Assailed by the government's coercive methods, the Cinematographers' Union, itself the product of Thaw-era liberalization, became moribund. The association that had vigorously defended scriptwriters against the censors' "red pencil" and negotiated qualified autonomy for filmmakers in the late 1950s and 1960s turned into yet another listless administrative body in the bureaucratic chain after 1968.

Official pressures to restore the myths of the Stalinist past and tighten control over the film industry had deleterious effect on Thaw-era celluloid masculinity. The validation of individual experiences, private emotions, and interpersonal non-homosocial relationships typical of Khrushchevian heroes receded from the cultural landscape. The Brezhnev leadership used both films and television miniseries to relegitimize Stalinist masculinity with its stress on patriarchy, ideological consciousness, and allegiance to the state's historical mission. After 1968 the state privileged the genres of spy thrillers, police procedurals, murder mysteries, and historical melodramas rather than continue promoting psychological dramas and intellectual films. The favored genres of the Brezhnev period thus replaced Thaw-era emotive intellectuals with tougher and more dynamic protagonists. The regime also glamorized Civil War and Second World War film heroes in order to rearticulate a masculinist, patriarchal paradigm within a grand historical schema and thus project the virility and grandeur of bygone eras into a lackluster contemporaneity. As embodiments of state power, soldiers, detectives, and police officers employed a detached rationality and a highly-developed sense of patriotic duty to conduct their lives and better their communities. In the context of this cultural re-Stalinization even Lenin's image required "butching up" in order to counter the benign and gentle aura Thaw-era artists ascribed to the occupant of the mausoleum. According to Golovskoi, a secretary of the Communist Party Central

Committee, L. F. Il'ichev declined to widely distribute M. I. Romm's 1970 documentary on Lenin because the leader of the October Revolution came off as insufficiently stern and indomitable.[10]

The (re)turn to grand historical narratives and monumental masculinity not only reflected the authorities' preoccupation with projecting its authority but also mirrored more general concerns about the state of Soviet masculinity. A widespread disillusionment that emerged during the early to mid 1970s facilitated a retreat into the country's more glorious (and certain) past. Historian John Bushnell reports on a pervasive and deep-rooted pessimism among the Soviet middle class under Brezhnev. Bushnell contends that the middle class's perception of, and anxiety about, the country's economic underperformance colored other (non-economic) spheres of activity. He argues: "Skepticism about official economic policy is but one manifestation of middle-class disengagement from the regime's goals. Civic cynicism and alienation are so pervasive that by comparison post-Watergate America seems a hotbed of utopian optimism: few members of the Soviet middle class will admit that they do more than go through the motions of their professional and civic duties." [11]

The pessimism Bushnell outlines fed into the populace's need for a shared cultural microcosm in which they could find affirmation for desiring a more stable and clearly delineated universe. While the widespread optimism in the country's future under Khrushchev enabled directors to promote more ambiguous representations of masculinity, the popular sensitivity to a gradually worsening domestic situation under Brezhnev

[10] Ibid., 197.

[11] John Bushnell, "The 'New Soviet Man' Turns Pessimist," in *The Soviet Union Since Stalin*, eds. Stephen F. Cohen, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Robert Sharlet (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 186.

stimulated a demand for more clear-cut masculine models.[12] As Elena Prokhorova points out: "The return to more heroic times allowed the Soviet male a ready-made and sanctified space for fantasizing about a regained space of mission, resolution, and action—in short, the standard masculinity set."[13] Plagued by alcoholism, an astronomical divorce rate, and the feeling that "society made it very hard to do "man's work," the male spectator identified all the more with heroes who asserted themselves confidently in both the public and private spheres.[14] In this sense, the authorities' push to resurrect large-scale heroes committing epic feats fed into a larger social trend that valorized Slavic machismo as an authentic expression of one's masculine identity. The bard, actor, and poet Vladimir Vysotskii best exemplified this phenomenon since he appealed to men of all social strata and political persuasions by "projecting masculinity to the nth power." Andrea Lanoux and Helena Goscilo identify the multiple ways in which Vysotskii typified the lure of streetwise machismo: "as the cool, tough Gleb Zheglov in Stanislav Govorukhin's 1979 cult TV police series *The Meeting Place Cannot Be Changed* (Mesto vstrechi izmenit' nel'zia); as the craggy, gravelly-voiced alter ego of the intrepid pilots, soldiers, mountain climbers, and prisoners in his songs; and as the

[12] John Bushnell remarked on the optimism of the 1960s: "This New Soviet Man was proud of his country's accomplishments, confident that the Soviet Union was *the* rising power in the world, convinced that the Soviet Union's rapid economic advances were being translated into a rising level of personal well-being, and certain that the Soviet system provided unlimited personal opportunities, especially for the young." See Bushnell, "The 'New Soviet Man' Turns Pessimist," 182.

[13] Elena Prokhorova, "The Post-Utopian Body Politic: Masculinity and the Crisis of National Identity in the Brezhnev-Era TV Miniseries," in *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 133.

[14] Lynne Atwood remarks on a similar phenomenon, commenting that large portions of the population under Brezhnev traced the country's dire social problems to a feminization of men and masculinization of women. See Lynne Atwood, "Gender Angst in Russian Society and Cinema in the Post-Stalin Era," in *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, eds. Catriona Kelly and David Sheperd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 354.

hard-drinking, uncompromising iconoclast married to the Russian-French actress Marina Vlady."[15]

Perhaps no other phenomenon signified the conclusion of the reformist intelligentsia's Thaw-era cultural project more irrefutably than the blockbuster television miniseries *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (Semnadtsat' mgnovenii vesny). The show's depictions of gender roles, the narrative techniques, and glorification of the past all pointed to a reversion to Stalinist tropes. T. M. Lioznova's 1973 serial, consisting of twelve seventy-minute episodes, took its inspiration from the equally popular Iu. S. Semenov's novel of the same title. The protagonist of the novel and television series is a Soviet intelligence agent, Maksim Maksimovich Isaev who infiltrates the very top of the Nazi Security Services (*Sicherheitsdienst* or SD) at the beginning of the 1930s. Once there, he assumes the identity of Standartenführer Otto von Stirlitz and distinguishes himself through loyalty and effectiveness.[16] The TV series depicts seventeen moments during the spring of 1945 and focuses on how Stirlitz practically singlehandedly exposes a British and U.S. attempt to conclude a separate peace with the Nazis and open a joint front against the U.S.S.R.

Stirlitz epitomizes an ideal Soviet intelligence worker and articulates a post-Thaw masculinity. Because he served the state for most of his life, he displays an ironclad will and superior mental abilities. In many ways, he takes after the 1920s revolutionary heroes because of his asceticism, modesty, and businesslike manner. He rarely drinks and never indulges in sexual escapades. The only extravagance Stirlitz indulges takes the form of driving his posh Horch automobile at breakneck speed. His restraint aside, Stirlitz also

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[15] Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux, introduction to *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 19.

[16] Like James Bond, Stirlitz/Isaev played the protagonist in thirteen of Semenov's novels stretching from 1966 (*Password Unnecessary* [Parol' ne nuzhen]) to 1990 (*Otchaianie* [Desperation]).

exudes sophistication. Like a true Renaissance Man, Stirlitz proficiently discusses philosophy, history, and science in the majority of European languages. Not only a picture of discipline and refinement, Stirlitz remains a true patriot. Even when surrounded by the riches of the Western world or the exoticism of faraway lands, the Soviet spy longs for his socialist homeland.

In almost all regards, Stirlitz represents the antithesis of his Thaw-era predecessors. While Sergei in *Lenin's Guard* struggles to determine how to live and Viktor in *Three Days of Viktor Chernyshev* surrenders himself to everyday tedium, Stirlitz singlehandedly saves Cracow from destruction, foils Germans' plans to develop a nuclear weapon, and ensures that a roving Soviet transmitter remains undetected. In contrast to the Hamlet-like figures of the Thaw period, Stirlitz at no point displays self-doubt or hesitation. Stirlitz embodied a masculinity defined by an ability to act rather than contemplate. Although Stirlitz's mind is as sharp as Sherlock Holmes', he uses his intelligence to better serve the state rather than to reflect on his own standing in the world.

Although the Soviet spy remains dispassionately rational in the majority of his dealings, he is never cruel and often acts with compassion. His benevolence, however, is a far cry from the emotiveness typical of Thaw protagonists. Rather than governing his life, feelings remain carefully managed and strategically deployed. He covertly helps those abused by the Nazi authorities and German civilians unassociated with the regime. Any type of personal life, however, plays a secondary role in the officer's life. During the entire run of the miniseries, Stirlitz recalls his wife only once. Significantly, in the one episode he remembers her, he flashbacks to a clandestine meeting in Germany during the early 1930s when they could merely glance at each other across the room without exchanging a single

word. In this way, Lioznova establishes Stirlitz's primary connection to a homosocial masculine environment rather than to a more domestic environment. Moreover, by depicting Stalin as issuing orders directly to Stirlitz, Lioznova revives the "great Soviet family" myth and reestablishes Stalin as the ultimate example of Soviet masculinity. As in the aviator cult, Stirlitz becomes the obedient "favorite son" of the Father of the Peoples. Unlike Sokolov in *A Fate of a Man*, who experiences the loss of his wife and children as his defining wartime event, Stirlitz's identifies much more strongly with the patriarchal structure and largely ignores his personal life.

By reducing the role emotions and intimate connections play in the life of the protagonist, *Seventeen Moments of Spring* constructs a logical and ordered world. Unlike the existentialist universe in which Thaw protagonists operate, the structured cosmos in Brezhnev-era productions allows men to once again tame and govern their surroundings. Although the miniseries depicts a German locale, it nonetheless suggests a universally governable space in which a community of men exercises their influence and jockeys for influence. One could as easily imagine a neo-imperial government offices in the Stalinist Soviet Union filled with soldiers like Stirlitz whose highest calling consists of serving the homeland among likeminded men of arms. Furthermore, the third person voice-over that fills in gaps in the storyline, explicates Stirlitz's inner thoughts, informing the viewer about the background of all other characters further demonstrates the low tolerance Brezhnev-era productions had for ambiguity in the narrative: "Omniscient, ubiquitous, and omnipotent, the voice-over controls the development of the plot, the meaning of History itself, and the actions of the male protagonist."[17] Lioznova thus leaves nothing to chance; the voice-over categorically rejects any sort of vagueness in interpretation and the viewer is left to merely

[17] Prokhorova, "The Post-Utopian Body Politic," 136.

observe and internalize the action on the screen. In contrast of reformist Thaw-era directors who wanted spectators to engage and wrestle with questions their heroes' action raised, Brezhnev-era filmmakers were more prone to provide easily-digestible answers.

Although Stirlitz negated the values that defined Thaw-era protagonists, I would argue that the latter enabled an ironic distance from any type of hyperbolic or overly theatrical representations of masculinity. Once exposed as an element of Stalin's oppressive system, the larger-than-life film heroes could no longer fully regain their cultural cache. The myriad jokes that appeared about Stirlitz reveal the self-consciousness with which the populace approached the country's most famous spy and his celluloid ilk—their genuine fame notwithstanding. The two jokes below are representative of the Stirlitz oeuvre in that they mocked the very traits that made Stirlitz a household name: his staged displays of deductive reasoning, his overblown daring, and an overdramatized sense of suspense.

> Stirlitz went into Müller's empty office. He walked up to the safe and pulled on the handle. It wouldn't open. After making sure that he was alone, he took out his gun and blasted away. Still, the safe wouldn't open. Next, he put a hand grenade under the safe and removed the pin. After the smoke cleared, Stirlitz once again tried to open the safe. He was unsuccessful yet again. Having thought about it for a bit, the experienced intelligence officer at last concluded: "Must be locked!"
>
> Stirlitz opened a door. The lights went on. Stirlitz closed the door. The lights went out. Stirlitz opened the door again. The light went back on. Stirlitz closed the door. The light went out again. "It's a fridge!" concluded Stirlitz.

Although Thaw-era heroes disappeared from the screen, Stirlitz could not escape their legacy since they decisively discredited hypermasculine heroics as a legitimate and authentic expression of Soviet subjectivity.

Even though Thaw-era protagonists in many ways represented an idiosyncratic phenomenon, their legacy proved enduring. They forever discredited Stalin's famous 1945

dictum that men are merely cogs who keep the "great state machine in motion."[18] Thaw-era heroes not only validated, but also permanently complicated popular and official perceptions of human psychology within the socialist context. The celluloid heroes that emerged in subsequent decades—although reflecting the conservative agenda of the reigning gerontocracy—built on de-Stalinized masculinities to reflect and come to terms with the particularities of the Soviet existence.

[18]"Preiom v Kremle v chest' uchastnikov parada Pobedy." *Pravda*, June 27 1945, p. 2.

APPENDIX

Table 1.1 Highest-Grossing Soviet Films, 1960-1970.

	Title	Year	Genre	Tickets Sold (in millions)
1	*The Diamond Arm* (Brilliantovaia ruka)	1968	Comedy	76.7
2	*The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (Kavkazskaia plennitsa)	1966	Comedy	76.5
3	*Wedding in Malinovka* (Svad'ba v Malinovke)	1967	Comedy	74.6
4	*Operation "Y"* (Operatsia "Y")	1965	Comedy	69.6
5	*Armor and Sword* (Shchit i mech)	1968	Adventure/Action	68.3
6	*New Adventures of the Elusives* (Novye prikliucheniia neulovimykh)	1968	Adventure/Action	66.5
7	*Amphibian Man* (Chelovek-amfibiia)	1961	Sci-fi	65.4
8	*War and Peace* (Part One) (Voina i mir)	1965	Historical Drama	58.3
9	*Liberation* (Osvobozhdenie)	1968	Drama/War	56.1
10	*The Strong in Spirit* (Sil'nye dukhom)	1967	Adventure/War	55.2

Source: Nashe kino: Baza dannykh fil'mov, http://www.nashekino.ru/ (Accessed April 10, 2009)

Table 1.2 Highest-Grossing Soviet Dramas, 1960-1970.

	Title	Year	Tickets sold (in millions)
1	*Clear Skies* (Chistoe nebo)	1961	41.3
2	*Fate of a Man* (Sud'ba cheloveka)	1959	39.2
3	*Ballad of a Soldier* (Ballad of a soldier)	1959	31.1
4	*The House I Live In* (Dom, v kotorom ia zhivu)	1957	28.9
5	*The Cranes Are Flying* (Letiat zhuravli)	1957	28.3
6	*Nine Days of a Year* (Deviat dnei odnogo goda)	1962	23.9
7	*And If It's Love* (A esli eto liubov?)	1961	22.6
8	*Hamlet* (part 1) (Gamlet)	1964	21.1
9	*Into the Storm* (Part 1) (Idu na grozu)	1965	19.9
10	*Il'ich's Gate* (Zastava Il'icha)	1964	8.8

Source: Nashe kino: Baza dannykh fil'mov, http://www.nashekino.ru/ (Accessed April 10, 2009)

Table 1.3 A Selection of Highest-Grossing Foreign Films in the Soviet Union, 1960-1970.

	Title	Year	Country	Genre	Tickets Sold (in millions)
1	*The Magnificent Seven*	1960	USA	Western	67
2	*Spartacus*	1960	USA	Historical Drama	63
3	*Mother's Love*	1969	India	Musical Melodrama	52.1
4	*Fantômas*	1964	France	Action/Suspense	46
5	*The Other Woman*	1961	Egypt	Musical Melodrama	37.9
6	*Divorce, Italian Style*	1961	Italy	Comedy	27.8

Source: Sergei Novikov, Lidery sovetskogo kinoprokata, http://es-che.livejournal.com/130514.html (Accessed April 15, 2009)

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Fate of a Man (Sud'ba cheloveka), dir. S. Bondarchuk (1959)

Forty- first (Sorok pervyi), dir. G. Chukhrai (1956)

Hamlet (Gamlet), dir. G. Koznintsev (1964)

His Name Was Robert (Ego zvali Robert), dir. I. S. Ol'shvanger (1967)

Into the Storm (Idu na grozu), dir. S. G. Mikaelian (1965)

Journalist (Zhurnalist), dir. S. Gerasimov (1967)

July Rain (Iul'skii dozhd'), dir. M. Khutsiev (1966)

Kanal (Kanał), dir. A. Wajda (1959)

Lenin's Guard (Zastava Il'icha), dir. M. Khutsiev (1963)

Little Sergei (Serezha), dirs. G. Daneliia and I. Talankin (1960)

Man from the First Century (Muz z prvního století), dir. O. Lipský (1961)

Man From Nowhere (Chelovek niotkuda), dir. E. Riazanov (1961)

Night (La Notte), dir. Michelangelo Antonioni (1961)

Nine Days of a Year (Deviat' dnei odnogo goda), dir. M. Romm (1961)

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