

CATRIONA  
KELLY

# SOVIET ART HOUSE

LENFILM  
STUDIO  
UNDER  
BREZHNEV

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*Lenfilm Studio under Brezhnev*

CATRIONA KELLY

OXFORD  
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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press  
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kelly, Catriona, author.

Title: Soviet art house : Lenfilm studio under Brezhnev / Catriona Kelly.

Description: New York : Oxford University Press, [2021] |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020031233 (print) | LCCN 2020031234 (ebook) |

ISBN 9780197548363 (hardback) | ISBN 9780197548370 (paperback) |

ISBN 9780197548394 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Lenfilm—History. | Motion picture industry—

Soviet Union—History. | Motion picture industry—

Russia (Federation)—History—20th century.

Classification: LCC PN1999.L4 K45 2021 (print) | LCC PN1999.L4 (ebook) |

DDC 384/.80947—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020031233>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2020031234>

DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197548363.001.0001

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Paperback printed by Marquis, Canada

Hardback printed by Bridgeport National Bindery, Inc., United States of America

*For Julian Graffy, film expert and friend*



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## Preface and Acknowledgments

When Stalin died, the Soviet Union started to make movies again. From a bare trickle in 1951, output swelled to a flood. Suddenly, young directors, camera and sound operators, designers, craftspeople, actors, editors, and administrators deluged the nation's studios. Not all the remarkable films of the era were made by young people (Mikhail Kalatozov was fifty-four when his landmark film, *The Cranes Are Flying*, won top prize at Cannes in 1957, and transformed national and international ideas of what was possible in the Soviet cinema). But many were. This book tells the story of some of them.

In the 1920s, Soviet cinema became world famous because it offered visions of a new life, and the hope of international transformation led by the first worker state. The cinema of the post-Stalin decades grew from a different body politic, scarred by the legacy of political repression and the huge casualties of war. The Twentieth and Twenty-Second Party Congresses of the Communist Party pressed urgent moral and social questions about the future of Soviet society, shaking the old certainties. The new creators of the Soviet cinema were employees of state institutions, and few if any of them were political dissidents. Often, they sincerely held to Soviet ideals, such as egalitarianism, the dignity of labor, and the importance of world peace. However, many of them were bitterly disappointed by the failure on the part of the Soviet leadership to live up to its proclaimed political and social goals. While committed to a realist representation of the world, their interpretation of what precisely this meant frequently put them at variance with those who managed and regulated the Soviet cinema. The art that they hoped to create accorded poorly with official canons. Rather than political probity, they were concerned with emotional truth. The ubiquitous term “intonation,” for the specific character of the filmmaker's art, conveyed this sense of individuality expressed through affective means.

Soviet film history was in signal respects cohesive. Filmmakers, in the main, trained in central film schools such as the All-Union State Institute of Cinema (VGIK) and, from the 1960s, the Higher Courses for Scriptwriters and Directors, both based in Moscow. Actors, wherever their home city, had a nationwide following.<sup>1</sup> Most importantly, production was directed from the center, through the bureaucracies of the Ministry of Culture of the USSR. But studios as well as filmmakers had their own “intonation.” In this book, one of them, Lenfilm, is at the center of discussion.

Analyzing the new cinema of the post-Stalin years from the perspective of a single studio allows us to understand the art form in novel ways. There has been a transformation of film history in recent decades. Since the opening of the archives in the early 1990s, the ideological travails encountered by some of the USSR's foremost filmmakers have

<sup>1</sup> The majority of actors had a “day job” in a particular Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Riga, etc. etc. theater, rather than belonging to in-house “actors' studios” (see chapter 3), but their cinema fan base was not dependent on this. Film and theater acting were to a significant extent separate tracks.

been meticulously documented—no less in the post-Stalin years than in the decades before the dictator died. But commentary so far has mainly focused on the editorial side of film production. By looking closely at the life of the studio, including budgetary and practical matters (what happened when films ran out of time and funding, how to cope with the demands of location shoots amid infrastructural defects and unpredictable shortages), we can start to understand film production in a broader spectrum. A case study of one studio places film management, rather than film “censorship” (a misnomer anyway, as I shall show) in the center of attention. Seeing in close-up allows us to grasp the specificity of cinema as activity and art form, but also to view with a new intensity the ways in which cultural politics, institutional governance, work relations, and corporate identity developed at this period of intensive social transformation.<sup>2</sup>

As well as being typical, Lenfilm was distinctive (like all studios across the USSR and the wider world). Its post-Stalin flowering came not during the Thaw era that has become a relatively familiar period of film history (and Soviet history more generally), but between the late 1960s and the early 1980s. This phase, usually seen as a dismal era of “stagnation,” was considerably less drab in the cinema. What Soviet parlance termed “cadre leapfrog,” in other words, movement of officials from one position to another, accelerated to bewildering speeds. Movies regularly hit trouble on their way to the screen. What reached the public, too, was often fresh and unexpected, unlike, say, the contents of Soviet newspapers or even Soviet literature.

I first became aware of this back at the start of the 1980s, when I was a student spending a year in the provincial city of Voronezh. The cultural events on offer were, in the main, drab. The local symphony orchestra’s level of technical competence was low, and its repertoire stale; the opera and ballet were little better. The Drama Theater had decent acting, but plays ran the gamut from minor prerevolutionary classics such as Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin’s *Krechinsky’s Wedding* to Mikhail Shatrov’s Lenin drama *Blue Horses on Red Grass* (actually one of the more watchable offerings). Contemporary art exhibitions (or any art exhibitions) were in abeyance; in the few local bookshops, material that drew the eye was limited to texts by nineteenth-century local authors, such as Aleksandr Ertel. (Ivan Bunin and Andrei Platonov, much better-known Voronezh natives, could be purchased only for hard currency in Moscow.) Architecture offered little respite: any building not painted yellow was office-envelope brown or pigeon-wing gray. When covered in sheet ice, as it was much of the time from late November to mid-April, Voronezh could be demoralizing.

Salvation came in the form of the cinema. There were excursions to the House of Officers to watch Bollywood and eat ice cream out of chrome dishes. There were visits to the Proletarian Cinema, Spartacus, Youth, or Sunlight to view the home-produced popular repertoire of the day: Boris Durov’s Chinese-border thriller, *Pirates of the Twentieth Century* (Gorky Studios, 1979); Emil Lotianu’s bodice-ripping melodrama about a love

<sup>2</sup> To date, the microhistorical approach has generally focused on the Stalin era: see e.g. Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Ordzhonikidze’s Takeover of Vesenkha: A Case Study in Soviet Bureaucratic Politics,” *Soviet Studies* 37: 2 (1985), 153–172; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley, 1995); Yuri Slezkine, *The House of Government* (Princeton, 2018). The main work on the post-Stalin period relates to literary journals: see, e.g., Denis Kozlov, *The Readers of Novyi Mir: Coming to Terms with the Stalinist Past* (Cambridge, MA, 2013); Neringa Klumbyte, “Communist Propaganda, Artistic Opposition, and Laughter in the Lithuanian Satire and Humor Journal *Šluota*, 1964–1985,” *Lithuanianus* 60: 3 (2014), [http://www.lituanus.org/2014/14\\_3\\_01Klumbyte.html](http://www.lituanus.org/2014/14_3_01Klumbyte.html)

affair between a horse rustler and a fortune-teller, *The Gypsy Camp Goes to Heaven* (MF, 1975); and Yury Egorov's comedy about a mother with ten children at a school reunion, *One Day Twenty Years On* (Gorky Studios, 1980), starring Junoesque beauty Natalya Gundareva. I was bowled over by Tengiz Abuladze's *Tree of Desire* (Gruziya Film, 1977), as intense and strange as Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (Dovzhenko, 1965), and I trekked to a factory club halfway across the city to watch Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (MF, 1979), evading a rowdy gang in the unlit street where we were disgorge at the end. But one of the biggest impressions was a film of yet another kind, Joseph Heifitz's *Married for the First Time* (LF, 1979), about a middle-aged woman who finds unexpected contentment with a soulmate her own age. Watching it again recently, I realized there was a whole sententious subplot about the heroine's spoiled daughter that my memory had put on fade. It was the atmospherics and the intensely observed cinematography by Vladimir Dyakonov (1941–1997), mainly known for his work in documentaries, as well as the affecting acting by Evgeniya Glushenko in the lead, that had stayed with me.

Exposure of a different order came in 1985, when I watched Aleksei German's *My Friend Ivan Lapshin* (LF, 1984), unlike any other film I had seen in its carnival energy. Later, when researching my book on memory and city identity in St. Petersburg, I watched Lenfilm concentratedly, and with consistent interest and delight.

Partly, then, this book is a tribute to a personal enthusiasm. But I also want to put film into history. Often, late Soviet film production is seen as a set-to between a small number of uniquely gifted individuals and the hostile officers of state. However, to a larger extent than in the literary world, and indeed in music, painting, or photography, the state was provider and patron. Writers, musicians, artists, and photographers could carry out work of their own volition, and share it with audiences of friends (or indeed not share it). Filmmakers did not have this option.<sup>3</sup> And the problem for the industry was not state funding as such (common in other European cultures as well, as in TV and radio too), but the insistent and conflicting expectations that went with the financial support—including the efficiency drive imposed on studios from the late 1960s onward as well as ideological pressure.

I hope, here, to give a sense of why cinema mattered to its makers and audiences at the time. Konstantin Lopushansky, one of Lenfilm's directors from the late 1970s, remembered a teacher that he spoke to who had actually passed out with emotion after a screening of Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror*. Revekka Frumina, an exceptionally intelligent and perceptive writer and scholarly linguist, described her own relationship with the cinema in similar terms (“Only naive viewers cry their eyes out over a fabrication, but you can count me as one”). Aleksei German, one of Lenfilm's most admired directors, writing in 1979, underlined the importance of emotional empathy above all: “You can edit a film impeccably, or you can mess up the scale and suddenly realize with revulsion what you've done when it's too late. Real professionalism, though, is when you yourself weep along with your heroes when they're in pain and suffering.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Closer analogies would be opera, ballet, or orchestral music, all requiring substantial resources and significant state support. All of these art forms also share film's paradoxical status as the collective vehicles of individual emotional intensity (my thanks to Gerry Smith for this point).

<sup>4</sup> M. Trofiimenkov, “Tarkovsky v 1997-m,” interview with Konstantin Lopushansky, *IK* 10 (1997), 96; R. Frumkina, “The Naive Viewer,” *Russian Social Science Review* 49: 1 (2008), 24; Aleksei German, “Pravda—ne skhodstvo, a otkrytie,” *IK* 2 (1979), 64.

There is nothing new or specific about the idea that art can be defined as the transmission of feeling—Tolstoy, for instance, advanced a famous argument to that effect in his *What Is Art* (1898). In *Non-indifferent Nature*, a vast treatise written in the 1940s, but first published in 1964, Sergei Eisenstein developed Tolstoy's theory of art as emotional communication into a holistic view of film in which every component—music, framing, mise en scène, rhythm, edit—contributed to the impact.<sup>5</sup> Eisenstein espoused a particular aesthetic of strong emotion—ecstasy, frenzy, self-loss—that was consonant with the heroic transformation of everyday life at the center of his own films. The emotional register of late Soviet films was often different, counterpointing (to use Eisenstein's own term) the representations of Soviet classic cinema. Thus, the new generations of artists both contributed in their own way to an established national tradition of film and varied it, sometimes to the point of unrecognizability. Whichever way, the stress on feelings rather than ideas put them at cross-purposes with what was still the USSR's official artistic code at the time, socialist realism—a development fundamental to the complexities of institutional and personal history.<sup>6</sup> And the treatment of feeling was a central part of Lenfilm's self-definition in artistic terms. Whether or not they actually represented their home city, filmmakers based in the former capital subscribed to a distinctive aesthetic, at once lyrical and austere.

In *Soviet Art House*, I examine the mechanisms and the personalities that shaped film production inside and outside Lenfilm during the Brezhnev years and discuss the studio's ethos, its sense of corporate history, and its shared aesthetic. But I also look at individual films whose production history and impact were in some respect remarkable. Throughout, I have sought to avoid the kind of extended synopses, or translations of the visual into the verbal, that one sometimes gets in histories of the cinema. I aim to show how films “read” on the screen, as well as how they reflected institutional preoccupations in the studio and beyond, the “common places” of understanding at the time, and the personal interests of their creators. Above all I am interested in the nature of art as defined and practiced at Lenfilm, a place both typical and exceptional, as any Soviet film studio had to be. Whatever it made, Lenfilm strove to be, so to speak, a “house of art,” and it is that striving, in all its fragility and contradictoriness, that I examine here.

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<sup>5</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *Neravnodushnaya priroda*, in *Izbrannye sochineniya*, vol. 3, ed. S. I. Yutkevich et al. (M., 1964), 37–432. The title is a riposte to Pushkin's late poem, “Whether I wander down noisy streets,” which ends with the image of “indifferent nature” shining above the lyric hero's grave. Some of the material in Eisenstein's essay was excerpted for Soviet periodicals during his lifetime, or presented as lectures to his students at VGIK (see the editorial commentary, *Izbrannye sochineniya*, 613–644). I cite here the 1964 edition rather than fuller recent editions with scholarly annotations, since I am interested in the source to which the main subjects of this book would have had access. For a detailed discussion of this text, and much else of interest in late Eisenstein, see Joan Neuberger, *This Thing of Darkness: Eisenstein's Ivan the Terrible in Stalin's Russia* (Ithaca, NY, 2019).

<sup>6</sup> I am mainly concerned with the creative process, rather than the emotional response to film as an aspect of reception, the subject of recent work in affect theory, e.g., Vivien Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley, 2004); for a study of this subject with reference primarily to the physical senses, see Emma Widdis, *Film, Feeling, and the Soviet Subject* (Bloomington, IN, 2018). Alas, Lenfilm's Information Bureau threw away the letters that it received, and there are few replies to viewers preserved (an exception is a file of miscellaneous materials, mostly complaints, from 1982: see SD, op. 33, d. 16, ll. 1–218). This precludes the kind of detailed analysis given by Kozlov in *The Readers of Novyi Mir*.

This book has been a great pleasure to research and write, partly for reasons to do with my own life history. My parents were musicians, as were many of their friends (while others included people in closely allied lines of work, such as librettists and visual artists). It was through them, too, that I had my first contact with professional filmmaking. When I was about twelve years old, a documentary film crew arrived at our house to shoot a scene in which Scottish composer John Geddes and my father ran through a new work for piano that had been specially written for the film. The crew squeezed into the upstairs music room with its two grand pianos, and we watched from a corner the transmutation of the familiar under the flood of white light. At that point, I realized once and for all that films are “made.”

Working on Lenfilm has been a project of recognition in other ways also. As I read transcripts of studio meetings and talked to filmmakers from very diverse professions, I returned to that familiar world of my childhood—spontaneous, improvisatory, often stressful and quick-tempered, a place of laughter but also of profound seriousness. Creative artists can be (and often are) egotistical, demanding, obsessed with their own, usually eccentric, visions. However, they have an egalitarianism and informality that, to be honest, I sometimes miss in the academic environment. The filmmakers that I write about here shared with my parents and their friends a principled impatience with bureaucratic obfuscation of all kinds and deep loyalty to those they worked with. At times, judgments could be vicious: one of my parents’ friends, provoked unbearably by someone’s botched performance, created uproar by announcing to a packed hall at the Royal Academy of Music, “Christ, what bloody awful playing!” With comparable directness, Aleksei German, leaving a viewing at Leningrad’s House of Film, observed to the entire audience, “He used to be a good cameraman, but as a director, he’s shit.” Yet, though feuds might boil, there was a communality of purpose and warmth of relations that now leads people regularly to remember Lenfilm as “a big family.” Families, after all, often fall out.

A significant part of the pleasure of writing has indeed lain in contact with the generous and talented people who once worked, and in some cases still do work, at Lenfilm. In the current studio management, I owe an enormous debt to everyone in the Department for External Relations, particularly Aleksandr Pozdnyakov, historian of the studio, with his encyclopedic memory for Lenfilm’s past. Olga Agrafenina, head of the department, is herself the daughter of film director Vitaly Melnikov, and her encouragement of this project has been vital to its progress. Lyubov Arkus and her colleagues at *Séance* film publishing have also helped a great deal, as have Konstantin Shavlovsky and Sasha Ahmadshina at *Poryadok slov* bookstore and cultural center. Film historian Peter Bagrov, who has a wider knowledge of Leningrad film history than almost anybody, has been an informed and engaging conversant. Mikhail Meilakh provided invaluable information on Lenfilm’s status in the wider city, as well as suggestions for contacts. Michael Bird was a generous host in Moscow. Outside Russia, specialists such as Julian Graffy, Birgit Beumers, Evgeny Dobrenko, Mark Lipovetsky, Nancy Condee, Ian Christie, Stephen Hutchings, Lilya Kaganovsky, and Rossen Djagalov have been welcoming to an adventitious visitor on their territory. I have learned much from Alex Graham, another historian of Lenfilm currently completing a doctorate at University College London, and from film specialists at the University of Oxford, particularly Reidar Due. Especial thanks to Julian Graffy, again, for invaluable comments on the

entire manuscript, and likewise to Gerry Smith; and to Polly Jones, for constructive criticism of chapters 1–4. Nancy Condee and Stephen Lovell have been ideally encouraging and perceptive readers for Oxford University Press, and I am grateful, of course, to the Press itself, particularly Norman Hirsch, senior editor of the Academic and Trade Division and his assistant Lauralee Geary, production manager Leslie Johnson, copy editor Richard Isomaki, and project manager Rajesh Kathamuthu. Above all, though, I would like to thank the current and former employees of Lenfilm who have given this project their time and attention in the form of interviews, including directors Yuly Fait, Boris Frumin, Konstantin Lopushansky, Vitaly Melnikov, and Aleksandr Sokurov, camera operators Dmitry Dolinin and Anatoly Lapshov, scriptwriter Natalya Ryazantseva, sound operator Natalya Levitova, designer Marina Azizyan, former chief editor of the First Creative Unit Frizheta Gukasyan, former studio chief editor Nelli Mashendzhinova, film editor Leda Semenova, and many others. I am extremely grateful to Marina Samsonova for helping with some of the interviewing, and to Olga Smolyak for support with locating and copying a large tranche of documents in Moscow. Warm thanks also to those I work with at the University of Oxford, to Justine Waddell and colleagues at Kino Klassika educational film charity in London, and to colleagues at the University of California, Berkeley, New York University, UCL, the European University, St. Petersburg, Memorial International, Moscow, the Yeltsin Center, Ekaterinburg, the University of Tartu, Estonia, the History of Russian Reading project at the University of Milan, and the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, where material from the book was presented in preliminary form. For advice in Riga I warmly thank Janis Keruss at the Latvian State University, and in Kyiv, Tamara Hundorova and Sergiy Trymbach, and for help with contacts, Yuri Slezkine, Natalya Poltavtseva, and Benjamin Musachio. I also acknowledge with gratitude the help of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, which supported my research with a fellowship in 2015–2017; to the John Fell Fund at the University of Oxford and the Ludwig Fund, New College, Oxford; to EU in Russia, which sponsored my talks in Moscow and Ekaterinburg; and to the staff of the libraries and archives where I have worked, particularly the Central State Archive of Literature and Arts (TsGALI-SPb.), the Central State Archive of Politico-Historical Documents (TsGAIPD-SPb.), and the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts (RGALI).

## Terminology and Transliteration

Film production is in many ways international, but there is also variation in detail between different traditions. To reflect the fact that the duties of, say, a second director in the Soviet Union were not exactly the same as those of a first assistant director in a Western studio, I have retained literal translations of such job denominations. I use “proposal” rather than “treatment” for the short outline that was the first step in film-making, and “literary scenario” for the first version of the script. Rather than the phrase “film crew” (referring exclusively to technical staff), I have employed a literal translation, “production group” (which includes artistic and financial management also), and I have followed Russian practice also in using the terms “operators” (for camera and sound personnel) and “assistants” (with no attempt to specify particular duties, as in “dolly” or “boom”—work tasks were generally pooled). To avoid confusion with “director” in the sense of “film director” (Russian *rezhisser*), I have adopted the style “production director” to refer to the administrator responsible for budget control and general group management during the production of individual films, and “general director” or “Lenfilm director” to refer to the administrative head of the entire studio. *Khudozhnik-postanovshchik* (literally artist-director) is rendered “production designer,” to avoid confusion with “film artist” in the sense of filmmaker, and “artistic director” (*khudozhestvennyi rukovoditel*, literally “artistic supervisor”), the senior filmmakers in charge of the creative units. I uniformly use the style “actress,” since gender parity was not characteristic of the Russian cinema at the time I am describing (indeed, the word *aktrisa* is still ubiquitous). These linguistic preferences should, I hope, help give a sense of what was similar and different about Soviet film production.

A problem is the term *khudozhestvennoe kino*, which sometimes means “feature film” in the collective sense (“specialists in feature film”). However, “feature film” also has the Russian equivalent *igrovoe kino*, while *khudozhestvennoe kino* (as opposed to *khudozhestvennyi film*, “a feature film” in the singular) was sometimes used in the Soviet period to refer to films of artistic ambition. I have therefore rendered *khudozhestvennoe kino* as required by the context.

In some cases I have preferred more accurate English translations of Russian film titles than those used for, say, commercial Western distribution; the “Filmography” includes, alongside English versions, transliterations of the original titles.

In documents from Goskino and the studio itself, Lenfilm is often placed in scare quotes (“Lenfilm” Studio), but I have not reproduced this feature of punctuation in the text or notes.

Transliterations from Russian follow the simplified BGCN-PGN scheme (Dostoevsky not Dostoevskii, etc.), omitting the prime symbols (‘ and ’) sometimes used to render soft and hard signs (ь and ъ). Exceptions are made where an alternative form has become familiar (e.g., Joseph Heifitz rather than Iosif Kheifits). However, with Aleksei German (whose surname is pronounced with a hard G), I have preferred letter-for-letter

transliteration to the competing alternatives, Guerman and Gherman, derived from languages other than English. All place names are given in the forms that were standard at the period the book discusses (Kiev not Kyiv, Alma Ata not Almaty, etc.)

The internal documents from the Lenfilm files held in TsGALI-SPb. and TsGAIPD-SPb. mainly consist of uncorrected stenographic records that abound in typographical and other errors. For instance, Aleksandr Sokurov's name ubiquitously appears in the phonetic rendering "Sakurov." Except in particularly significant cases (such as where the spelling is so distorted as to raise real questions about what is meant), I have silently corrected such slips.

# List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the text and notes:

ALF	Arkhiv kinostudii Lenfilma (Lenfilm Archive, St. Petersburg). Items in this archive have no inventory numbers.
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
GDA SBU	Galuzevyi derzhavnyi arkhiv Sluzhby bezpeky Ukrainy (Central State Archive of the Security Service, Ukraine), Kyiv.
Goskino	Gosudarstvennyi komitet po kinematografii (State Committee on Cinema), the managing bureaucracy of Soviet cinema from 1963.
<i>IK (Iskusstvo kino, The Art of Cinema)</i>	the most authoritative journal of Soviet and Russian cinema, founded in 1931.
<i>K (Kadr, translated in-text as Frame)</i>	the studio newspaper of Lenfilm. The punning title means both “cadre” in the sense of employee and “frame” in the sense of a film image.
KO	<i>Kinematograf ottepli: Dokumenty i svidetelstva (The Cinema of the Thaw: Documents and Testimony)</i> , ed. V. Fomin (M., 1998).
L.	Leningrad.
LF	Lenfilm.
LP	<i>Leningradskaya Pravda (Leningrad Pravda newspaper)</i> .
LVA	Latvijas Valsts arhīvs (State Archive of Latvia), Riga.
M.	Moscow.
MF	Mosfilm.
PA	Documents from Lenfilm studio Communist Party organization held in TsGAIPD-SPb., f. 1369, op. 5.
RGALI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow.
RGANI	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii, Russian State Archive of Recent History, Moscow.
RGB	Rossiiskaya gosudarstvennaya biblioteka, Russian State Library, St. Petersburg.
RNB	Rossiiskaya natsionalnaya biblioteka, Russian National Library, St. Petersburg.
SD	Documents from the studio management (meetings of artistic councils of the creative units and the studio-wide artistic council, correspondence, script files) held in TsGALI, f. 257.
<i>SE (Sovetskii ekran, translated in-text as Soviet Screen)</i>	the most popular viewers’ magazine, 1925–1998.

SEC	The Scenarios and Editorial College (Stsenarno-redaktsionnaya kollegiya) of Goskino, the body charged with reviewing and recommending for approval scripts and films. From the early 1970s, this body bore the official title Chief Scenarios and Editorial College (Glavnaya stsenarno-redaktsionnaya kollegiya), but to avoid confusion, I have consistently used the abbreviation SEC here.
SPb.	St. Petersburg.
TsGAIPD-SPb.	Tsentralnyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov, Central State Archive of Politico-Historical Documents
TsGALI-SPb.	Tsentralnyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv literatury i iskusstva, Central State Archive of Literature and Art, St. Petersburg.
TsDAMLM U	Tsentralnyy derzhavnyy arkhiv-muzey literatury i mystestva Ukrainy, Central State Archive of Literature and Art, Ukraine (Kyiv).
VL	<i>Vechernii Leningrad</i> ( <i>Evening Leningrad</i> newspaper).

# Introduction: The Art House in Space and Time

Cinema may be the art of time, but it is the product of specific place.<sup>1</sup> Lenfilm Studio stands on St. Petersburg's foremost residential avenue, Kamennooostrovsky Prospect, leading from the majestic Trinity Bridge to islands that have been pleasure resorts for the city's notables over more than two centuries. A tall portico supported by Corinthian columns, built in 1956, forms its entrance, separated from the street by lawns and a flight of steps.

The frontage, though, is only part of the story. Behind it stretch acres of outbuildings, from the functional to the dilapidated. Along corridors paneled in Soviet tan wood with gray concrete floors stand the *pavilion*, soundstages, black-painted hangars vast enough to accommodate at least one full orchestra and corps de ballet alongside film crew, actors, and technicians. Through wandering courtyards with ulcerated tarmac and the dandruff of fallen stucco stretch other stages, workshops for costumes and set design, offices, car parking, and even a memorial cemetery.

Back in Soviet times, the studio was in little better shape physically. But areas that now echo to the occasional passing footstep bustled with activity. The complex catered not just to the needs of art, but to many of life's other requirements, with a canteen and a café (the latter still functioning today in updated form), a hairdresser, a clinic, a grocery distribution point (figure I.1), and, off-site, a crèche, kindergarten, and some of the best sports facilities in Leningrad, as well as an entire new complex in the distant suburb of Sosnovaya Polyana, housing the film-processing laboratories, more soundstages, and space for outside filming (figure I.1).

Like other major employers in the city—by the 1960s, there were over three thousand people on the payroll—Lenfilm was a city within a city, an entire separate world. Less enormous than Leningrad's major factories, it was at the same time one of the largest and most prestigious cultural institutions in the city. Only the Hermitage and the Kirov Ballet had the same kind of national prominence. Its location—then called Kirovsky Prospect—stood just a few doors down from the former apartment of Sergei Kirov,

<sup>1</sup> Two particularly influential Russian discussions of cinema as the art of time are Sergei Yutkevich, *Kino—eto pravda 24 kadra v sekundu* (M., 1974) and Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, trans. K. Hunter-Blair (London, 1989). Cinema as the art of place is less frequently discussed in the Russian tradition. Most studies to date are concerned with imaginary space in film texts themselves. Lida Oukaderova, *The Cinema of the Soviet Thaw: Space, Materiality, Movement* (Bloomington, IN, 2017), discusses the resonance of the new architecture of the Khrushchev era in films of the period. Among contributors to the extremely useful B. Beumers (ed.), *A Companion to Russian Cinema* (Chichester, UK, 2016), two (K. Platt, "Shooting Location: Riga," 427–451 and B. Beumers, "Capital Images: Moscow on Screen," 452–474), deal with the representation of specific places.



Figure I.1 Lenfilm in the early 1970s

Party leader from 1926 to 1934, which had been turned into a museum in 1955 as support to the creation of a full-scale posthumous cult.<sup>2</sup>

The movies made in Leningrad during the early Soviet period are listed in every roll of honor. In the 1920s, despite chronic shortage of funds, institutional disarray, and the difficulty of finding scripts (certainly by writers with a socially acceptable background), the Leningrad studio, then known as Northwest Cinema (Sevzapkino), produced, alongside documentary and propaganda shorts and forgettable melodramas, some of the country's most ambitious avant-garde work, such as Grigory Kozintsev and Lev Trauberg's radical adaptation of Gogol, *The Overcoat* (1926) and their *The New Babylon* (1929).<sup>3</sup> Sumptuous, if historically controversial, panoramas of nineteenth-century

<sup>2</sup> For an outline of the Kirov cult at this period, see Catriona Kelly, *Remembering St Petersburg* (Oxford, 2015, available for download on academia.edu), chap. 1.

<sup>3</sup> The ideological and managerial difficulties are well documented in the Party files of the day—see, for example, TsGAIPD-SPb., f. 1369, op. 1, d. 25 (1925). For an introduction to Lenfilm's output at this period, see Robert Bird, "Lenfilm: The Birth and Death of an Institutional Aesthetic," in Beumers, *Companion to Russian Cinema*, 66–91.

Petersburg appeared in Evgeny Chervyakov's Pushkin biopic, *The Poet and the Tsar* (1927) (by now the studio had been renamed Lensovkin). The vistas of modern Leningrad formed the backdrop to the first part of Kozintsev and Trauberg's pioneering sound film, *Alone* (released by yet once more renamed Lensoyuzkino, 1931), about a teacher dispatched by state fiat to the Altai.<sup>4</sup>

The political importance of cinema made Lenfilm still more vulnerable in the Stalin years. Party meetings were mainly preoccupied with "working over" employees who posed a political risk. After the murder of Sergei Kirov on December 4, 1934, the city-wide purges unleashed on Leningrad convulsed the studio also. In 1936, supposed "counterrevolutionary" materials in Friedrich Ermler's biopic of Kirov led to accusations of "criminal negligence" on the part of the studio's director, Izrail Katsnelson, who was removed from his post in January 1937 and later executed.<sup>5</sup> Six months later came the arrest and execution of Lenfilm's artistic director, Adrian Piotrovsky.<sup>6</sup> Ermler was lucky to escape with his life.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the 1930s also saw the Leningrad studio, renamed Lenfilm in 1934, make a fundamental contribution to the Soviet canon, with films such as *Counterplan* (Sergei Yutkevich and Friedrich Ermler, 1932) and Kozintsev and Trauberg's *Maxim Trilogy* (1934–1938) embodying the grandiose optimism of the period. Ermler was able to release his film based on the life of Kirov in lightly fictionalized form as *The Great Citizen* (1937–1939), which won him the first of four Stalin Prizes. Most famous of all was the Civil War epic *Chapaev* (1934, figure I.2), made by "the brothers Vasilyev," once commemorated in the name of the street opposite the studio, where an apartment block for leading filmmakers stands. (Sergei and Georgy Vasilyev were not in fact brothers, but a legend is a legend.)

Wartime evacuation (to Alma-Ata in the Kazakh Republic) and the "picture dearth" of the postwar years hit Lenfilm hard: in 1951, it managed to release just one feature, the veteran German director Herbert Rappaport's *Light in Koordi*, about collectivization in Estonia. The studio (like most other Leningrad institutions) suffered a hemorrhage of talent to Moscow. Particularly bitter losses were Sergei Yutkevich, the veteran of the avant-garde, and Sergei Gerasimov, whose *The Brave Seven* (1936) was one of the studio's prewar hits. But Mikhail Kalatozov, a more fleeting presence (he made just two films before disappearing into evacuation in 1941), also provoked regret once he had made a world reputation with *The Cranes Are Flying*. By the late 1950s, *Chapaev's* status had become a burden, making Lenfilm vulnerable to accusations that yet another year had passed without a movie of comparable quality.<sup>8</sup> However, heritage was also

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of this film, see L. Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology: Soviet Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1928–1935* (Bloomington, IN, 2018), 40–69.

<sup>5</sup> For documents relating to this case, see G. L. Bondareva (ed.), K. M. Anderson, L. V. Maksimenkov, L. Kosheleva, and L. A. Rogovaya (comps.), *Kremlevskii kinoteatr 1928–1953. Dokumenty* (M., 2005), 115 (345–346), 116 (347–348), 137 (386).

<sup>6</sup> See his biography on kinoteatr.ru.

<sup>7</sup> Ermler was accused at a Party meeting of making a "disgusting anti-Party, politically harmful speech" at the trades union meeting two days earlier, and of personal links with "enemies of the people Portnov and Katsnelson." "Protokol sobraniya partiinnoi organizatsii kinostudii," June 23, 1937, TsGAIPD-SPb., f. 1369, op. 2, d. 8, ll. 8–16.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, in 1981, film director Igor Usov (1928–1990) reminisced: "We can remember the days when people queued to watch our films, not the pulp Western efforts they watch now, I mean films that created the era, such as *Chapaev*" (PA, d. 244, l. 29).



Figure 1.2 Still from *Chapaev*

the source of pride, combined with a nagging sense of unfairness. The studio deserved better: higher levels of funding, larger numbers of quality scripts, greater respect from government and Party.

The lure of the capital was hard to resist. It was mainly Mosfilm's directors who enjoyed publicity at the Moscow Film Festival (revived in 1959) and festivals abroad, and largely films made there (with a sprinkling of token titles from the republics) that were selected for screenings at prestige occasions such as congresses of the Communist Party or revolutionary anniversaries. Despite the leadership's commitment to at least a cautious program of regionalism, Lenfilm had less prominence in the post-Stalin years than under the former leader. The proliferation of other studios beyond the capital—in the Baltic, Central Asia, the Caucasus, Ukraine, and even the Russian provinces (Sverdlovsk)—undermined the binary domination of Moscow and Leningrad back in the old days.<sup>9</sup>

The distribution of feature film studios—one for each Soviet republic except Ukraine (two) and the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) (seven), with Moscow the only city to have more than one—precisely reflected the power hierarchy. And where Lenfilm perched in buildings it had inherited from commercial predecessors

<sup>9</sup> Apart from Mosfilm and Lenfilm, the studios releasing feature films for adults in the post-Stalin era were the Gorky Studio (formerly Mezhrabpom), the Sverdlovsk Film Studio, the Dovzhenko Studio (Kiev), the Odessa Film Studios, Belarus Film, Moldova Film, Armenia Film, Azerbaijan Film, Georgia Film, Lithuania Film Studio, Riga Film Studio, Tallinn Film Studio, Kazakh Film, Uzbek Film, Kyrgyz Film, and Tadzhik Film.

(the core of the complex had once served as Aquarium music hall), Mosfilm spread itself over a lavish purpose-built microdistrict on the scale of a small town, with an entire back lot for street scenes as well as thirteen modern soundstages.<sup>10</sup> Yet a studio's output could challenge this official order of precedence—witness the universal admiration among cinema professionals for filmmaking in Georgia.

So far as Soviet viewers, too, were concerned, the studio brand mattered: alongside the title of a given film, its genre (“drama,” “comedy”), and the names of any star actors, it was splashed across publicity and media advertising. At the start of the credits appeared the studio name in capitals, accompanied in some cases by a photographic marquee (in the case of Mosfilm, Vera Mukhina's *Factory and Collective Farm Woman* sculpture, and in the case of the Odessa studio, a ship's bell).<sup>11</sup> According to a popular saying, “There are good films, middling films, bad films, and Dovzhenko”—despite or because of the fact that titles made in the Kiev studio also included an artistic triumph, Sergei Paradzhanov's *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors* (1965).<sup>12</sup> Lay audiences, as well as critics and film historians, strongly believed that each studio had its own “handwriting,” just as individual filmmakers did.<sup>13</sup> Goskino, the State Film Board, which managed the production process from 1963 onward, found Lenfilm distinctly perturbing. “The studio continues to pursue its weird line of work,” an official reported in 1965. Seven years later, the sense of oddity was further entrenched: “There is this strange atmosphere of double accounting, double ideologies, double value systems,” reported another Goskino official in 1972. “We have to do something, it's deeply alarming.”<sup>14</sup>

Success, or failure, resonated through the entire studio. Studios as well as film artists garnered rewards (Orders of Lenin and the like), or, on the other hand, public calumny.

<sup>10</sup> For an informative history of the Lenfilm complex, see Aleksandr Pozdnyakov, *Listya akanta: Istoriya i predystoriya Lenfilma. 1914–2014* (SPb., 2014). On the construction of MF, see “Mosfilm ne srazu stroilsya,” [http://www.mosfilm.ru/news/?ELEMENT\\_ID=11553](http://www.mosfilm.ru/news/?ELEMENT_ID=11553). The oldest building on the thirty-six-hectare site (in the Sparrow Hills, formerly Lenin Hills, area of Moscow) was put up in 1927–1932, and this was followed by extensive building in 1935–1954, and further additions in 1964, 1978, and the 1980s. Other purpose-built studios included Kazakhfilm (on a substantial site above Alma-Ata), the Gorky Studios, and the Kiev Studios (later Dovzhenko), though none was on the scale of Mosfilm.

<sup>11</sup> On Lenfilm's marquee (the Bronze Horseman), see chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> I recall the disparaging aphorism about Dovzhenko from a conversation with a friend in the provincial city of Voronezh in 1981. In the 1960s, Dovzhenko sheltered “Ukrainian poetic cinema,” as practiced not just by Paradzhanov, but, say, Leonid Osyka (see Olga Kim, “Tableau Cinema: Hidden Possibilities of the Cinematic Medium in the Post-Stalin Era,” PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2019). However, a crackdown on “nationalism” in the 1970s and 1980s nipped this direction in the bud. For documentary evidence of audience preferences by studio, see *Otchet o nauchno-issledovatel'skoi rabote po teme “kino i zritel”* (L., 1976); for indicative comments on the artistic excellence of Georgian film (as well as its lack of viewer appeal), PA, d. 249, l. 36.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., “Pocherk studii” (on the Riga studios), *IK 2* (1979), and the discussion of the Gorky studio in *IK 5* (1979). The term “Leningrad school” was sometimes used also, though mainly about the films produced in the 1930s (see, e.g., S. Eisenstein, “Programma prepodavaniya teorii i praktiki rezhissury,” *IK 4* (1936), 56, describing it as “hypertrophied representationality”; Leonid Trauberg in “Kollektivnaya povest ob Adriane Piotrovskom,” *IK 12* (1962), 48; D. Pisarevsky, “Bratya Vasilyevy: put i metod,” *IK 11* (1980), 139). For its arrival in film criticism of the late 1980s, see conclusion. My own position is close to that of S. Dobrotvorsky, “Leningradskoe kino: evolyutsiya avtorskoi traditsii,” in M. L. Zhezhenko (ed.), *Peterburgskoe “novoe kino”: sbornik statei* (SPb., 1996), 34–46, who sees the term as meaningful mainly as “a kind of psychosociological communality and shared worldview,” though where he emphasizes shared ethical positions, I have dwelled more on shared aesthetic perceptions.

<sup>14</sup> Meeting of the SEC, April 10, 1965, RGALL, f. 2944, f. 5, d. 104, l. 6; meeting of the Cinema Committee, July 14, 1972, *ibid.*, op. 1, d. 854, l. 104. Igor Chekin, Lenfilm's “curator” (liaison officer) at SEC, took the unusual step of publishing an article, “Lenfilm segodnya,” in *Sovetskoe kino* 52 (December 26, 1964), 2–3, in which he expressed anxieties about “inflated assessments” of various film projects, disappointing releases, and a tendency to “subjective” and “taste-based” judgments.

This was also true of other cultural institutions, from ballet troupes and orchestras to theaters and publishing houses, which were also subject to strict state planning, and also strove to adjust it to accommodate the aesthetic preoccupations of artists themselves.<sup>15</sup> Yet filmmaking was exceptional not just because of cinema's ideological status as what Lenin termed "the most important of all the arts," but because cinema was an industry as well as an art form. Orchestras did not run production lines for musical instruments, any more than publishing houses typeset and printed books and journals, or theater managements built their own auditoriums. But every part of the filmmaking process, aside from manufacture of raw stock and equipment such as cameras, was in the hands of studios themselves. This had, of course, been the case since the first Soviet "film factories" were created after 1917. But there was a massive difference of scale between the prewar operations, with their staffs of dozens (in the 1920s) or hundreds (in the 1930s and 1940s), and the thirty-five hundred employees of Lenfilm's post-Stalin years.

Traditionally, "factory" had been a metaphorical term for a process that was in signal respects artisanal.<sup>16</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s, the "film industry" was a much more accurate term than before. As a branch of industry as well as culture, the making of movies was susceptible not just to ideological pressure, but to budgetary pressure. Studios, unlike publishing houses, needed not just to ensure that their plans reflected the right profile of themes (two revolutionary-historical films, three films of contemporary life, one literary adaptation, two sports films, and so on), but also that the budgets allocated to a particular title would work in practical terms. Costs (for instance, payments for casual labor out on location) were inflationary, yet budgets had inflexible limits—around 400,000 rubles for a standard 2,700-meter, ninety-minute, film, the equivalent of perhaps \$1.5 million in today's money.<sup>17</sup> Though budget management was the task of a film's production director, rather than the film director or director of photography, the availability of resources was just as important a motive in artistic choices as the ideological drift of the day. It was crucial which location could be used and for how long, how many takes could be shot, how much editing time was available, and which actors could be engaged. Indeed, economic factors—particularly after 1970, as campaigns against wastage in Soviet industry started to mount and shortages of basic goods proliferated—could sometimes be as difficult to negotiate as ideological pressure.<sup>18</sup>

All these processes have left abundant traces in the documentary record. Lenfilm's Party organization alone generated several thousand pages of typescript annually. It extended to the general studio-wide Party meetings at which Party officials were elected,

<sup>15</sup> For an instructive discussion of "artistic repossession" of the obligatory "thematic plan" in debates at the Artistic Council of the Kirov Theater, see Christina Ezrahi, *Swans in the Kremlin: Ballet and Power in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> For an excellent institutional study of Soviet filmmaking in the Stalin era, emphasizing precisely its "artisanal" character, see Maria Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin* (Ithaca, NY, 2017).

<sup>17</sup> The ruble was a nonconvertible currency, so this calculation is based on a comparison of median wages in the 1960s–1970s USSR at ca. 130 rubles versus the median salary of c. \$50,000 in the United States, 2019. It is important to bear in mind, however, that many budget costs, for example the wages of the production group, costs of services such as editing and costume, etc., were traditionally borne by the Soviet studio, though this began to change in the 1970s (see chapter 2).

<sup>18</sup> Here I to some degree depart from previous institutional studies of this period, which have tended to see budgets as notional or abstract. See, e.g., Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY, 2011), 48–49.



Figure I.3 In the Party Committee

the studio's past and future output discussed, and key ideological issues addressed; the minutes of meetings of the Party Committee (figure I.3), responsible for ideological control and for discipline; and specialist sub-organizations such as the Party section for creative workers and the Party-management *actif*.

Also energetically generative of paperwork were the studio's other administrative organs, such as the chief editorial board, the artistic councils, the financial administration, and no doubt the KGB also, though those files are currently off limits to researchers.<sup>19</sup> Goskino kept a file on each film that often ran to dozens of pages.

<sup>19</sup> Some background on the KGB's regulation of the film industry is provided by records in other post-Soviet territories where security service archives are more accessible for research. The card indexes of agents working for the KGB in the State Archive of Latvia (LVA: digitized copies are downloadable on <https://kgb.arhivi.lv/>) indicate that the main concentration of security service activity was the personnel department (*otdel kadrov*) of Soviet organizations. Indeed, in 1956, the director of LE, Sergei Vasilyev, ordered the studio's "special section" (a customary euphemism for "security service department") dissolved, and replaced by "an inspector attached to the personnel department" (PA, d. 7, l. 68). However, it was only in exceptional circumstances (weeks after Khrushchev's speech denouncing political repression under Stalin at the Twentieth Congress) that such open discussion could take place. Written records generally suggest a work discipline role for the personnel department: e.g., young directors who were skipping classes on a course for assistant directors "were sent to the personnel department to explain themselves" (1965, PA, d. 71, l. 44). For its surveillance role, see, however, the discussion of restrictions on the employment of filmmakers with a Jewish background in chapter 3. At the same time, the Latvian records suggest that the numbers of informers in the film industry generally was small: in the early 1980s, there were just twelve in Riga, including a film projectionist, cinema artists, and several people working in film clubs, as well as six filmmakers from the Riga Studios. There were probably more agents at the Hotel Latvia than in the entire cinema world. Reports from the KGB to the Central Committee both in Latvia and in Moscow generally focused on writers' congresses rather than events in the cinema world: for the former (April 20, 1963), see LVA PA, f. 101, apr. 26, l. 109, ll. 6–12; for the latter (April 7, 1970), <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/ideolog/kgb70-7.pdf>; a report on artists and theater directors from June 19, 1975, is at <http://bukovsky-archives.net/pdfs/dis70/sam75-11.pdf>. I have not been able to trace lists of agents in the film world in the records of the KGB Ukraine. However, extensive consultation of the holdings in GDA SBU f. 16 (reports to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Ukraine) also suggests light surveillance, with filmmakers swimming on to the radar when their activities triggered investigation according to one of the KGB's political priorities—particularly alleged Ukrainian nationalist activity (as in the case of Sergei Paradzhanov—see, e.g.,

Alongside this, there are stenographic records of meetings held by top-level management (the Cinema Committee) to discuss policy issues in the industry.<sup>20</sup> During the 1960s and early 1970s, the SEC (from 1973, the Chief SEC) likewise held meetings to consider procedural issues.<sup>21</sup> Almost all of this material remains unpublished, and—individual film files excepted—is often ignored by film historians, though some central records have appeared in the document collections edited by film historians such as Valery Fomin and issued frequently since the start of the 1990s.<sup>22</sup> These paper trails lay bare most of the official proceedings in the studio and at least some of the communications with other bodies. Further discussions appeared in the studio's newspaper, *Frame*, published at roughly two-week intervals.<sup>23</sup>

The business conducted in unwritten form—unminuted meetings, telephone conversations, conversations over a cup of coffee—was equally important. Here memoirs and oral history are invaluable, helping to recreate the vanished studio atmosphere. Certainly, those recollecting the past may fluff details, and their engagement with it is seldom neutral—the arguments and slights of former years, or on the other hand, lost triumphs, add a specific coloration.<sup>24</sup> But this, too, is part of the story: rather than dismiss this material as per se misleading, we can understand it as part of the aura that surrounded the daily life of the Soviet film studio.

Records of meetings are, of course, equally flawed as indicators of what people “actually thought”: speakers were vividly aware of the ideological and ritual constraints of the occasion. Yet if they were definitely not “safe” or “private” spaces, meetings at Lenfilm

“Informatsionnoe soobshchenie o plenumе Soyuzа kinematografistov Ukrainy” [August 18, 1971], GDA SBU, f. 16, op. 1, spr. 1024, ark. 110–111). As for LF, there is only one case where KGB activities are alluded to directly (see the 1956 complaint about interference from the head of the Special Section, Comrade Zimenkov: PA, d. 7, ll. 68–72), though occasionally comments at meetings imply the presence of informants. See, e.g., the 1974 discussion of the delay in accepting the application for Communist Party membership from director of photography Boris Timkovsky (b. 1936) because of a story that he had joked about a GDR pilot who defected to France “and Kiselev got to hear about it” (PA, d. 148, l. 24). However, this may refer to tale-telling within LF, rather than to a report that reached Kiselev through a telephone call from “the organs.”

<sup>20</sup> See RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1.

<sup>21</sup> In 1973, these general procedural meetings seem to have been abandoned. After a series of discussions over the year of how the SEC worked with studios, Eleonora Barabash, deputy chief editor, briskly observed on December 29, “We should only listen to reports when the editor has something to say in the direction that actually matters to us, in other words, when it’s a question of forward planning. We should discuss films only when it’s a serious case, as with *Agony* [the controversial film by Elem Klimov] or Panfilov’s scenario [probably his *Joan of Arc* project, on which see chapter 13], but listening to all this stuff on who’s read what in which group—I don’t think we should do that.” RGALI, f. 2944, op. 5, d. 369. Op. 5 contains no further stenographic records of such meetings, and from the start of 1979, even outline minutes (*protokoly*) ceased to be recorded (or at any rate, archived).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, V. I. Fomin (ed.), *Polka: dokumenty, svidetelstva, kommentarii* (M., 1994); V. Mikhailov (ed.), *Zapreshchennye filmy: dokumenty, svidetelstva, kommentarii* (M., 1993); V. I. Fomin (ed.), *Polka: dokumenty, svidetelstva, kommentarii, vypusk 3* (M., 2006); *Kino i vlast: sovetskoe kino 1965–1975: dokumenty, svidetelstva, razmyshleniya* (M., 1996); KO; *Letopis rossii skogo kino*, 5 vols. (M., 2004–2016); “Rukovodstvo kinematografiei utverdit na Vasilyevskoi ulitse.” *Kniga pervaya. Rozhdenie Soyuzа kinematografistov SSSR, 1957–1966 gg. Khronika sobytii. Svidetelstva. Dokumenty* (M., 2018).

<sup>23</sup> *Frame* had a less than enviable reputation in the studio and beyond: Sergei Dovlatov’s *The Suitcase* (1986) recalls a secretary of the Party’s Regional Committee describing it as “a mind-bogglingly dreary and talentless publication.” <http://www.sergeidovlatov.com/books/chemodan.html>. However, until the late 1970s, at least, it carried some quite lively discussions.

<sup>24</sup> By and large (Aleksei German is an exception, for reasons that I explore in my chapter 19, dealing with *Lapshin*), filmmakers’ recollections collate quite well with the written record; particularly accurate are the memoirs of Sergei Mikaelyan, written in the late 1980s. Considerably less reliable are the accounts of former Goskino employees Boris Pavlenok and Dal Orlov, whose main purpose in writing was to slough off responsibility for shelving films and claim credit for recognizing talent.

were also not exactly public: even when powerful outsiders were present, participants often made uncongenial and sometimes risky comments, particularly in the form of the anonymous “voice from the floor.” And the language used was mostly not the *langue de bois* of *Pravda* editorials, but something closer to everyday educated speech, with attention above all to professional considerations, rather than to the contents of the latest statement by the Central Committee.<sup>25</sup>

When working on the history of architecture, I found myself piecing together scattered sources. A week’s work in five different archives might turn up a couple of dozen useful pieces of information. Film history lies at the other end of the spectrum: there are such mountains of data that beating a path is a serious challenge. Aside from its advantages in a practical sense, tracing the history of one studio permits the perception of different artistic sub-traditions within the apparent monolith of Soviet film production. Lenfilm was proud to showcase “Leningrad” topics, including, for instance, life in the city’s scientific institutes as well as war history and the local past generally.<sup>26</sup> But looking at the history of a studio is not only a contribution to the understanding of how “local knowledge” grew in the post-Stalin era.<sup>27</sup> It allows us to see filmmaking “in the round,” with an intensity of detail that is not possible if we limit attention to the history of certain famous films or the careers of selected directors.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Detailed reading of materials from Lenfilm’s Party organization indicates that even here, Party decrees had a rather marginal place in the discussions, unless they included direct attacks on Lenfilm itself. See also chapter 1, chapter 2.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., the approach to Veniamin Kaverin discussed in chapter 1, or general director Vitaly Aksenov’s call for more Leningrad topics (chapter 2).

<sup>27</sup> A large-scale study of the rise of “local knowledge” under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, and since, is Victoria Donovan, *Chronicles in Stone: Preservation, Patriotism, and Identity in Northwest Russia* (DeKalb, IL, 2019). See also Edith Clowes, Ani Kokobobo, and Gisela Erbsl  (eds.), *Russia’s Regional Identities: The Power of the Provinces* (New York, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> In the work of the French film theorist and critic Michel Chion, this broad production context is named “the profilmic reality.” See his *Words on Screen*, ed. and trans. C. Gorbman (New York, 2017), 4. Chion does not, however, explore this domain himself, and, to date, studio history has also been an infrequently adopted approach with reference to the USSR. Jamie Miller’s useful article, “Politics and the Mezhrabpom Studio,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 6:2 (2012), 257–269, is a pioneering exception for the early Soviet period; an earlier publication in German with material on this studio, G nter Agde and Alexander Schwarz (eds.), *Die rote Traumfabrik: Meschraprom-Film und Prometheus, 1921–1936* (Berlin, 2012), is mainly concerned with the films themselves. Joshua First, *Ukrainian Cinema: Belonging and Identity during the Soviet Thaw* (London, 2014), likewise focuses on ideology and aesthetics, rather than production conditions. Indeed, of all the studios in the late socialist world, only DEFA (the East German studio) has been the subject of any sustained attention. See, e.g., H. Blunk and D. Jungnickel (eds.), *Filmland DDR: Ein Reader zu Geschichte, Funktion und Wirkung der DEFA* (Cologne, 1990); S. Allen and J. Sanford (eds.), *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946–1992* (New York, 1999). The prominence of DEFA in production history terms is perhaps attributable to its low artistic standing compared with Soviet, Czech, or Polish filmmaking: a popular anecdote tells of a DDR citizen who complains to his doctor that he is being followed, and when the doctor gently suggests this may be a paranoid delusion, insists: “But no, doctor! I went to the cinema to shake him off and they were showing something by DEFA, and he stayed right to the end!” In the context of the US studio system, particularly notable are David Bordwell, Kristin Thomas, and David Staiger, *Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production* (New York, 1985), and Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System* (New York, 1989), which deals extensively with the role of the producer, though this approach is still overshadowed by auteurism. See, e.g., Robert Kolker, *A Cinema of Loneliness* (New York, first published in 1980, and in its fourth edition by 2011). Discussion of the British studio system has mainly been limited to entertaining and anecdotal descriptions of the “glory years” at Ealing, Pinewood, etc., though Henry Farrar, *A Golden Age in Film: Personal Accounts of the BBC Film Unit, Ealing Studios, 1936–1989* (Esrick, 2017), is informative about the technical side, while Elizabeth Grey’s lucid introduction, *Behind the Scenes in a Film Studio* (London, 1966), is now a valuable historical record of standard practices in the UK during the early 1960s. For a useful introduction to “production studies,” see Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell (eds.), *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries* (New York, 2009).

Histories of the Soviet cinema often present the filmmaking process in terms of conflict between “the censorship,” as represented by vetting bodies in the studio and at government and Party levels, and the will of individual film auteurs whose work was bedeviled by interference.<sup>29</sup> The process of getting a film approved for production was indeed formidable. Editors at the studio usually required at least a couple of revisions even at the stage when a proposal was submitted, and a “literary scenario,” or script outline, went through several readings before being sent for review by the Ministry of Culture or (after 1963) Goskino. If the “literary scenario” was approved, the director created a shooting script (and from the end of 1976, there was also an intermediate stage when a more detailed outline, the “cinescenario,” was submitted between the literary scenario and the shooting script). If approved by Goskino, the shooting script had to be cleared by the literary censorship body, Glavlit, before it was duplicated for distribution to the film’s “production group” and actors.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime, bodies in the studio, and sometimes also Goskino, scrutinized the screen tests and, once a film was in production, might also demand to see footage before the final edit.<sup>31</sup>

The completed film, after viewing in the studio, a process that almost always led to re-editing, went off to Goskino, which usually demanded further edits, a process that could lead to a prolonged to and fro, if indeed the film was released at all. At any point, the studio’s own branch of the Communist Party could decide to interfere, and—in all Soviet cities except Moscow—both script and film routinely had to be cleared by the Party bureaucracies at city and regional or republic levels before dispatch to Goskino.<sup>32</sup> For Lenfilm, this last level often proved particularly traumatic; one veteran of the cinema world has even claimed that the Party authorities here interfered more than they did anywhere else in the USSR, with the possible exception of Azerbaijan.<sup>33</sup>

Yet seen from the viewpoint of the studio—and that of individual employees such as film directors—the production process looked more complicated than a faceoff between creative artists and bureaucracy. In the literary world (Solzhenitsyn’s memoir *The Oak and the Calf* is an example), writers explicitly talked of “the censorship,” and often interpreted their editor as a kind of inquisitorial fifth column.<sup>34</sup> Filmmakers, on the other hand, referred to “the board” (*glavk*), and Goskino (or its Moscow address, “7

<sup>29</sup> The fullest study of top-level management of film censorship at this period, concentrating on materials from the Central Committee and the fate of various “shelved” films, is Martine Godet, *La pellicule et les ciseaux: La censure dans le cinéma soviétique du Dégel à la perestroïka* (Paris, 2010). Eugénie Zvonkine, *Kira Mouratova: Un cinéma de la dissonance* (Lausanne, 2012), includes discussion of Goskino’s handling of work by a major director of the period. See also Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Film scripts were sent to Gorlit, the city office of Glavlit, rather than the central body. The clearance stamp appears on the “approved version” of the shooting scripts for circulation.

<sup>31</sup> “Material” could refer to completely unedited footage, as in the English “rushes,” but was also used for preliminary edits at levels up to the rough cut (i.e., preliminary edit of the entire film, Russian *chernovoi montazh*).

<sup>32</sup> The good account of film censorship at this period in Godet, *La pellicule*, slightly misrepresents this process by suggesting (based on faulty information from her interviewees) that the Regional Committee was always responsible for *kontrol* of film production outside Moscow (71–72). As I shall demonstrate here, the Regional Committee in fact delegated a lot of this business to the City Committee (and one can add that, in the republics, it was the Central Committee that represented Party governance in the locality anyway).

<sup>33</sup> See V. S. Golovskoy and J. Rimberg, *Behind the Soviet Screen: The Motion-Picture Industry in the USSR, 1977–1982* (Ann Arbor, 1986), 18–19.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Akhmatova’s metaliterary *Poem without a Hero* (1940–1966), in which the editor grumbles about the fantastical nature of the section set in 1913–1914 that forms the first part of the poem.

Gnezdikovskiy pereulok”). Within the studio, the relationship between professionals and the different bodies engaged in “control” was by no means always antagonistic—after all, unlike writers, directors were part of the same work group as the controllers. Editors offered advice and support as well as criticism, as did the studio reviewing bodies such as the artistic councils and editorial board. There was a more strained, but generally manageable, working relationship with Goskino. Literary censorship was perceived in terms of anonymous “old biddies” (*tyotki*) without much in the way of literary sensitivity, making tiresome “interventions.”<sup>35</sup> Goskino’s editors were usually products of film schools, or at the very least, university literature departments, some with secondary lives as journalists or indeed screenwriters (and the body’s committee and council included famous directors and writers).<sup>36</sup> If we see relations between Goskino and studios as purely adversarial, and assume that filmmakers did their best to fend off interference (or, on the other hand, cravenly gave in to it), then there is a serious risk of misinterpreting or even distorting both individual and collective histories.<sup>37</sup>

As for the studio’s Party organization, records suggest that it was just as concerned with production issues such as “work discipline” and hitches in the supply chain as it was with ideology. The Party hierarchy was trickier to deal with, especially for a provincial studio such as Lenfilm, without the personal contacts and leverage available to the Moscow studios, or indeed some in the republics. But even here there was the possibility of negotiation, since the studio’s general director and chief editor were appointed by the Regional Committee of the Communist Party and were therefore by definition in good standing there. In any case, the day-to-day business of dealing with Lenfilm was in the hands of the departments of culture at the City Committee and the Regional

<sup>35</sup> This perception is borne out by archival records also: for example, the documentation of the chief censorship department (Glavlit) of the Latvian SSR, LVA f. 917, op. 1, d. 44 (Godovoi otchet o rabote Glavlita LSSR za 1965 g.), ll. 4–11; *ibid.*, d. 47, ll. 3–9 (1967); *ibid.*, d. 141, ll. 4–20 (“Protokoly soveshchaniya u direktora,” 1975–1977); d. 145, *passim* (“Otchet o rabote,” 1975).

<sup>36</sup> For the composition of Goskino’s artistic council, see, e.g., RGALL, f. 2944, op. 2, d. 214a, ll. 215–222. Valuable information about the character and style of editing at Goskino comes from Igor Sadchikov, who worked at Goskino for sixteen years (see Godet, *La pellicule*, 257–285). Sadchikov, a product of VGIK, underlined that he and his colleagues precisely had an editorial role and took an “all-round” view of the films they reviewed. This is confirmed by stenographic records of the SEC and its successor, the Chief SEC: editors worked closely with studio editors (“We visit there every so often and then, of course, we ring them up and write to them,” as the official responsible for Lenfilm recalled in 1965, RGALL, f. 2944, op. 5, d. 104, l. 7). In retrospect, Sadikov claimed that relations with Lenfilm were particularly good (Godet, *La pellicule*, 274). However, material from the time gives a rather different picture, with studio insiders sometimes voicing irritation or incomprehension at the chivvying from Goskino (see, e.g., my discussions in chapter 10, chapter 19).

<sup>37</sup> A striking example of this concerns Igor Sheshukov’s film *Viktor Krokhin’s Second Attempt*. The Goskino file on this film includes a letter signed by Sheshukov, LF general director Viktor Blinov, chief editor Lev Varustin, and Second Creative Unit chief editor Dmitry Moldavsky, and proposing a re-edit of the film with a list of changes to be made (GK, d. 3866, ll. 23–24). The 1992 collection *Polka* includes a partial publication of this letter (p. 157), with the editorial commentary: “The director [i.e., Sheshukov] is always ready to propose changes. Even before the film had been discussed at the [SEC], he proposed a list of changes that he intended to make.” In fact, the document opens with the following lines (not included in the *Polka* publication): “The administration of LF, the chief editor, and the Second Creative Unit, *having discussed with the director I. Sheshukov the comments made at the discussion of the movie Viktor Krokhin’s Second Attempt in Goskino USSR*, suggests the following list of changes that in our view will clarify the central conceptual drive of the film” (my emphasis). As my reading of many dozens of film files has shown, it was a normal procedure for Goskino officials to agree on a list of changes with the director and studio before Goskino delivered its written decision, and nothing about a filmmaker’s readiness to conform or otherwise can sensibly be concluded from the existence of a document of this kind, though the requirement that these changes be put in writing, rather than agreed to verbally, was a sign that Goskino attached particular importance to the edit; such documents are relatively rare.

Committee (mainly, in fact, the former), who, even if they mostly lacked expertise in film, at least became used to rubbing along with editors and administrators at Lenfilm.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, despite some tractability in ordinary working relationships, the studio management was extremely vulnerable if a big scandal broke out—for instance, some Party big cheese happened to be displeased with a studio release before, or indeed after, it reached the big screen. Contrary to the usual image of the Brezhnev era as a time of “stability of cadres” or “stagnation,” between 1972 and 1985 Lenfilm had four changes of director: the working atmosphere was, at times, more convulsive than “controlled.”<sup>39</sup>

The multifaceted and contradictory nature of “filtration” was especially obvious when it came to the management of young filmmakers. The entry into Soviet studios of novices in large numbers was a highly specific feature of the period after 1953. The centralization of the industry under Stalin had not only led to a radical drop in the number of films released, but to a marked contraction in the numbers of those who were entitled to make them. Production was concentrated in the hands of a small number of eminent directors, in the Soviet usage, “masters.” Opportunities for young directors were few, and were assigned by these senior patrons, on the basis of apprenticeship and personal preferment.<sup>40</sup> Almost none of VGİK’s, the state film school’s, graduates, whatever their graduating specialty, went on to make features: they toiled away directing documentaries, public interest movies, and films for schools. Most were not even allowed to shoot footage while in college. Instead, graduating students did sketches of proposed shots and wrote pitches for films they would never be able to make.<sup>41</sup>

The rapid expansion of the film industry under Khrushchev (from eight films nationwide in 1951 to over one hundred in 1957)<sup>42</sup> generated an all-out recruitment drive. VGİK graduates, who in the past might have waited years to make a feature, were suddenly in unprecedented demand. Even specialists in other art forms (theater directors particularly) could sometimes find themselves converting their skills to cinema production.<sup>43</sup> If Stalin-era film studios had been dominated by “masters,” under Khrushchev, the larger film studios, beginning with Mosfilm, were reorganized into “creative units” that were aimed precisely at the mentoring of young film artists.<sup>44</sup> VGİK graduates were assigned to studios to make diploma shorts and, if all went well, absorbed upon graduation into the permanent staff.<sup>45</sup> A radical reform of opportunity was underway. The role

<sup>38</sup> On the career paths of the Party officials responsible for culture, see chapter 2.

<sup>39</sup> At the time, the expression for this was “cadre leapfrog,” but as we shall see, the situation in Lenfilm was more stressful to participants than the metaphor would suggest.

<sup>40</sup> See Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan*, chap. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Vitaly Melnikov, *Zhizn. Kino* (SPb., 2005), 157. One of Melnikov’s classmates graduated on the strength of an amateur dramatics production, while others acted as assistants to established directors (157). When Melnikov himself was dispatched to the Leningrad educational films studio, he protested to the official in the ministry of cinema that he wanted to make art cinema (*khudozhestvennoe kino*). “So where is it, your ‘art cinema?’” the official replied, “Take your bit of paper and be grateful for what you have” (159–160).

<sup>42</sup> Godet, *La pellicule*, 51.

<sup>43</sup> As in the cases of Sergei Mikaelyan, Viktor Sokolov, and Aleksei German, to name but three.

<sup>44</sup> It is commonly assumed (see, e.g., Woll, *Real Images*; Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan*) that “creative units” were an invariable feature of Soviet film studios back to the 1930s. However, even after 1960, the system was not universal: the Riga Studio, for example, continued to assess scripts and films at the traditional studio-wide artistic council (see, e.g., the materials on *Family Melodrama* and *Is It Easy to Be Young*, LVA, f. 416, op. 4, d. 99; op. 11, d. 228). Nor did the units work in the same way in all studios (see further in chapter 1).

<sup>45</sup> This was a version of the nationwide system of *raspredelenie*, or “distribution,” a key feature of socialist employment policy that involved the posting of those graduating from higher-education institutes to further training or employment. Just as university graduates might end up anywhere from a prestigious research

of studios in mentoring young people was to be one of the most important aspects of their work right through the post-Stalin era.

The transformation of young filmmakers' career paths went with a nationwide upsurge of interest in youth, echoing the enthusiasms of the 1920s. Cinema, like other art forms, worked to the tick of the times. "Young people" in 1940s propaganda had been indistinguishable in terms of dress and gesture from their own parents. Now, physiology, dress, and behavior were understood as highly specific.<sup>46</sup> Youth cafes, youth music, and youth literature proliferated. An entire "youth prose" movement emerged, helped by *Youth* journal, founded in 1955; poetry readings and exhibitions of painting and photography multiplied; and regular discussions of "youth and the arts" took place in major journals and newspapers. The USSR's hosting of the World Festival of Youth in 1957 became as emphatic an announcement of the new policies as its sponsorship of the World Peace Congress had been in 1949.<sup>47</sup>

The primary purpose of Khrushchev's reforms was not the "liberalization" of society, but the revitalization of communist ideals and the regeneration of social and political practices.<sup>48</sup> Youth was instrumental to this planned remobilization of society, honoring, and faithfully transmitting, the achievements of the Soviet past. A cliché of the time, "the relay race of generations," with the ideological "baton" smoothly passing from hand to hand, captured the spirit. It was with exhortations to value the status quo that *Youth* journal opened. The poet Stepan Shchিপachev (1898–1980), doyen of the Stalin era, contributed a poem lauding the creators of the 1930s state projects as the model for today's young people. Fighter pilot ace and three-time Hero of the Soviet Union Ivan Kozhedub (1920–1991) evoked youth's "historical mission to complete the work begun by the fathers."<sup>49</sup> Within the workplace, threshold rituals and employment practices emphasized continuity: in factories, young workers were mentored by their seniors and subordinate to brigade leaders.<sup>50</sup> The aim was to instrumentalize the fervor and energy of young people, rather than allow this energy to drive social and political relations.

But alternative models for youth were also in the air. Since the postwar era, informal youth movements such as the *stilyagi* ("mods"), inspired by Western, particularly US,

institute to a village school, so the graduates of VGIK descended the scale from Mosfilm and Lenfilm at the top down to educational film studios in the "periphery" (the scale being shorter because there were far fewer graduates and positions for them to fill). As well as talent, such issues as whether the person had the legal right to reside in a certain city (insiders were favored because they had somewhere to live) and patronage weighed in the balance.

<sup>46</sup> For an elaboration of this argument, see Catriona Kelly, "The End of Childhood and/or the Discovery of the *Tineidzher*? Adolescence in Soviet and Post-Soviet Culture," in Matthias Schwartz and Heike Winkel (eds.), *Eastern European Youth Cultures in a Global Context* (Basingstoke, 2015), 21–44.

<sup>47</sup> On youth culture in the Khrushchev era, see Juliane Fürst, "The Arrival of Spring? Changes and Continuities in Soviet Youth Culture and Policy between Stalin and Khrushchev," in Polly Jones (ed.), *The Dilemmas of Destalinization: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (Abingdon, 2006), 135–153; Gleb Tsipursky, *Socialist Fun: Youth, Consumption, and State-Sponsored Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1945–1970* (Pittsburgh, 2015), chaps. 4–8; Pia Koivunen, "Performing Peace and Friendship: The World Youth Festival as a Tool of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy, 1947–1957," PhD dissertation, University of Tampere, 2013; Eleonory Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), chap. 2.

<sup>48</sup> On mobilization in the 1930s, see David Priestland, *Stalin and the Politics of Mobilization: Ideas, Power, and Terror in Interwar Russia* (Oxford, 2007); in the post-Stalin era, Katharina Uhl, "Building Communism: The Young Communist League during the Soviet Thaw Period, 1953–1964," DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2014; Lucy Dunlop, "Heroism under Brezhnev," DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> S. Shchипachev, "Yunost," *Yunost* 1 (1955), 3; I. N. Kozhedub, "O samom vazhnom," *Yunost* 1 (1955), 5.

<sup>50</sup> For further discussion, see Catriona Kelly, *St Petersburg: Shadows of the Past* (New Haven, 2014), chap. 7.

music and fashion, had gained traction in Soviet cities.<sup>51</sup> Broadening international contact (the 1957 World Festival of Youth in Moscow turned into a joyful carnival of the new globalization) added immeasurably to the lure of “the imaginary West.”<sup>52</sup> State-sponsored art had to engage with these cultural transformations, disappointingly if nothing else.

In any case, it was hard to draw lines. The protagonist of Vasily Aksenov’s *A Ticket to the Stars*, who abandoned the big city for distant parts of the Soviet Union, was acting in the spirit of the US “beat generation.” Yet Soviet official culture also approved of moving around, provided it was for the purpose of building state capacity. The Virgin Soil movement of the 1950s or the Baikal-Amur Railway Line of the 1970s had a lure made up in equal parts of revolutionary romanticism (the chance to transform the wilderness), self-advancement (work on a prestige project of socialist construction looked good on your CV), and (by no means the least important factor) the opportunity for high earnings.<sup>53</sup> If Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* was meant (in an adjusted translation) to be a portrait of young people’s malaise in Western societies, its mordant hero had a resonance far beyond “the ulcers of capitalism.” The book captured the mood among disaffected Soviet youth.<sup>54</sup>

Of all the arts, cinema had the most insistent youth focus. It enjoyed, to begin with, the status of a “young” genre (and one that had flourished in the years before the “cult of personality” while being stifled under the “cult”). Youth films’ potential for reaching the under-twenty-five age group (which, as surveys indicated, was much more likely to visit the cinema than to read books) underwrote the appeal of these films for studios.<sup>55</sup> It was by no means taken for granted that films about young people should be made by young directors. Vasily Aksenov’s hit novel *Ticket to the Stars* was snapped up by Mosfilm immediately after it was published, but the script was assigned to a director of decidedly mature years—Aleksandr Zarkhi (then aged fifty-three).<sup>56</sup> However, the understanding was that the remobilization of film studios, like other workplaces, would come from young talent, underwritten by expansion of training programs. While teaching at VGIK remained much as it had back in the old days (with heavy emphasis on reading round the subject and apprenticeship to a senior figure in the field), the The Higher Courses

<sup>51</sup> For a study focusing primarily on the immediate postwar years, see J. Fürst, *Stalin’s Last Generation: Soviet Postwar Youth and the Emergence of Mature Socialism* (Oxford, 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Aleksei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever until It Was No More: The “Last” Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2006); Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*.

<sup>53</sup> Christopher J. Ward, *Brezhnev’s Folly: The Building of BAM and Late Soviet Socialism* (Pittsburgh, 2009), points out (p. 88) that over 80 percent of male workers earned more than 300 rubles per month, a vast sum at the time. For analysis of motivation, see Tatyana Voronina, “Pamyat o BAME,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas* 2: 64 (2009), 76–95, and her review of Ward’s *Brezhnev’s Folly* in *International Review of Social History* 56: 2, 351–355.

<sup>54</sup> On the adjusting of the translation, see Samantha Sherry, “Better Something Than Nothing: The Editors and Translators of *Inostrannaya literatura* as Censorial Agents,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 91: 4 (2013), 731–758.

<sup>55</sup> An example of such a survey was carried out by the Institute of Philosophy’s Social Psychology group at the Astrakhan Railway Engine Repair Works in 1964. Forty-three out of fifty-one informants went to the cinema at least once a week (and twenty went six to ten times a month), whereas only thirty-nine mentioned reading as an important leisure pursuit and of these, only eight read more than five books in two months. “Ankety ucheta kulturnykh zaprosov naseleniya, zapolnennye rabotnikami Astrakhanskogo teploparovoznoremontnogo zavoda,” RGASPI-M, f. 1, op. 2, d. 1175, ll. 1–152. For the revival of sociological research that formed the background to such studies, see Boris Grushin, *Chetyre zhizni Rossii v zerkale oprosov obshchestvennogo mneniya*, vols. 1–2 (M., 2001, 2006); Boris Firsov, *Raznomyslie v SSSR* (SPb., 2008).

<sup>56</sup> Aleksandr Zarkhi, *My Younger Brother* (MF, 1962).

for Scriptwriters and Directors, set up in 1960–1963, offered teaching of a different kind, with master classes from a whole range of leading figures.<sup>57</sup> As time went on, some of its graduates were to have stellar careers in the Soviet cinema.<sup>58</sup>

In 1960, a substantial article in *Pravda*, “Films of the Young,” began by asking, “Who are they, these film directors who have emerged over the last few years? What emotional world, cast of thought, life experience, images, themes, subjects, have they brought to the screen?” As the author, Lyudmila Pogožheva, editor of *The Art of Cinema*, argued, they were generally graduates of VGIK and pupils of such outstanding masters as Sergei Eisenstein, Grigory Kozintsev, Mikhail Romm, and Leonid Trauberg. They specialized particularly in topics from contemporary life or drawn from “the last war.” Detesting elaborate rhetoric and pompous sets, they strove for simplicity and directness. Some worked more in a “poetic” direction, such as Grigory Chukhrai in *The Ballad of a Soldier*. The work of others, notably Sergei Bondarchuk (*The Fate of a Man*) was characterized by “stern manliness of style.” Sharp eye for detail and thematic ambition were notable features of work by other directors too, even if some had faults in the realization.<sup>59</sup>

In the words of a full-length book, *Young Directors*, published in 1962, not all “young” directors were actually young in the literal sense, “But the majority of them definitely are in terms of their creative age.” Their films showed “the dramatism of the search, of fearless exploration of life,” and “conflicts in their films are not constructed to foreordained schemas.” This was not so much a description as an ideal: young directors were supposed to capture a fresh view, rather than to create quiescent films of purely “decorative” import.<sup>60</sup>

Movies by and about young people provoked fear as well as excitement. Was the inexperienced director “politically literate” (for which read, was he or she familiar with the culture’s silent prohibitions)?<sup>61</sup> Might the film paint too black a picture, or appear to set a bad example to the young, believed to be a particularly malleable audience? It was precisely movies about young people that tended to provoke most controversy. Marlen Khutsiev’s *Ilyich Gate*, subjected to a fundamental re-edit after criticism from Khrushchev in 1962, was the most famous case.<sup>62</sup>

Yet the draw of youth themes—celebrated by international cinema as well as Soviet propaganda—endured. Just as young people were at the forefront of Khrushchev’s “Thaw,” so “Thaw cinema” was to a significant extent created by new-generation directors. Central features of the aesthetic—for instance, the emergence of a new body

<sup>57</sup> On the courses (the scriptwriters’ course was inaugurated in 1960 and the directors’ course in 1963, and they were combined in 1964), see *KO*, 256–283.

<sup>58</sup> For instance, both Aleksandr Sokurov and Konstantin Lopushansky came to Lenfilm through the Higher Courses route, having worked with Tarkovsky.

<sup>59</sup> L. Pogožheva, “Filmy molodykh,” *Pravda*, December 6, 1959, 6.

<sup>60</sup> A. L. Sokolskaya (ed.), *Molodye rezhissery: Sbornik statei* (L. and M., 1962), 5. For the enactment of the critical judgment, see the essays in this collection.

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., the comment by Sergei Ivanov at a Party meeting of the LF Creative Workers in 1960, PA, d. 27, l. 89: “The young film directors sent by VGIK have a low level of political literacy and make little effort to raise their ideological levels.” Right through the post-Stalin period, as I shall show, the problems of engaging young filmmakers from a political and ideological point of view remained a serious anxiety.

<sup>62</sup> On *Ilyich Gate*, see Woll, *Real Images*, 146–147; Godet, *La pellicule*, 33–39. The title is sometimes translated *Lenin’s Guard*, to reflect a pun in the word *zastava*, but the primary allusion is to a famous working-class district of Moscow. As I discuss in this book, other youth films that created significant upheaval included Heifitz and Melnikov’s *A Day of Happiness*, Mikaelyan’s *The Dreamers / I Take Up the Challenge*, and Viktor Sokolov’s *When the Bridges Go Up*.

language, the preference for spontaneity and sincerity—were directly connected with this youth dynamic.<sup>63</sup> At the same time, it was the treatment of young people, and “young directors,” that exposed one of the era’s central contradictions—between the centrality of innovation to political and social symbolism, and the intolerance of genuine dissent.

The conflicts were enhanced by the particular contradictions of the art world itself. Officials in key positions, notably Leonid Ilyichev (1906–1990), head of the Central Committee’s Department of Propaganda from 1958 to 1961, and president of the Ideological Commission from 1961 to 1965, continued to insist that “dislocations” of socialist realism were intolerable and subversive.<sup>64</sup> A Soviet artist’s eyes were still supposed to be focused on the “bright future.” The cheerful energy of art forms during the Thaw signified that the sclerotic authoritarianism of Stalin’s last years was no more. But it was also a cultural imperative, a manifestation of ideological probity.<sup>65</sup> As the magazine *The Art of Cinema* put it in 1961, it was not choice of style or genre that made Soviet cinematic art special. Soviet cinema was different because “it points a path to the future, because in explaining life, it strives to make life better, sounding a clarion call for the fight to achieve human happiness.”<sup>66</sup>

If this sense of optimism was a long-standing Soviet tradition, there was also a sense of rupture with the past. Discussion and debate were welcomed, even across the ideological gulf between the socialist and capitalist worlds. Attacks on “bourgeois critical realism” might be common, but the Moscow film festivals included, alongside showings of foreign films, discussions with artists and commentators of distinction (preferably, but not always, with “progressive” credentials). At the Second Moscow Film Festival in 1961, those debating “The Artist and the Era” included the Japanese director Kaneto Shindo, the US film critic Gideon Bachmann, and Marcel Martin, author of *Le langage cinématographique*. The discussion (an overview of which was published in *The Art of Cinema*) was ambitious, with Kaneto introducing the term “suffusion in consciousness” for the psychological focus of the recent Japanese cinema, Martin advocating “direct cinematography,” and Bachmann expounding on the need for audience and artist to be cocreators.<sup>67</sup> Contributors who argued that art should not be political were treated with irony or condescension. But the fact that such contributors had a voice at all marked a significant shift from the past—for instance, the presence exclusively of left-wing Western observers at the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934.<sup>68</sup> The “cinematic autarky” of the late Stalin years was at an

<sup>63</sup> On the shift in body language, see particularly O. Bulgakova, *Fabrika zhestov* (M., 2005); and Oukaderova, *Cinema of the Soviet Thaw*. E. Margolit, *Zhivye i mertvye: Zametki k istorii sovetskogo kino, 1920-kh—1960-kh godov* (SPb., 2012), 383–440, also addresses Thaw-era shifts in representation, though more of a thematic kind (e.g., the importance of everyday detail and the home, of the natural world as a parallel to human psychology, and so on). Cf. the discussions in the two collections edited by V. Troyanovsky, *Kinematograf ottepeli: kniga pervaya. K 100-letiyu mirovogo kino* (M., 1996), and *Kinematograf ottepeli: kniga vtoraya* (M., 2002).

<sup>64</sup> See, for example, the account by the film director Aleksandr Ivanov of Ilyichev’s speech at a meeting of “cultural workers” held in Moscow, December 18, 1962, PA, d. 43, ll. 214–216. Ilyichev, a graduate of the North Caucasus Communist University in 1924, had held a variety of top posts in the Soviet media, including the chief editorship of *Pravda* (1951–1952). In 1958–1961, he headed the Department of Propaganda and Agitation at the Central Committee.

<sup>65</sup> “Iskusstvo—radost,” *IK* 1 (1961), 1–4.

<sup>66</sup> See the editorial “Pobezhdaet Pravda,” *IK* 2 (1961), 3.

<sup>67</sup> “Khudozhnik i vremya,” *IK* 9 (1961), 14–22.

<sup>68</sup> For example, the German expressionist author Ernst Toller: *Pervyi Vsesoyuznyi syezhd sovetskikh pisatelei: Stenograficheskii otchet* (M., 1934).

end.<sup>69</sup>

Many leading Soviet filmmakers themselves were in any case aware of what was going on in the cinema of other countries: in the late 1950s, particularly Italy and France, but by the late 1960s, also Scandinavia, Britain, the United States, India, and Japan, not to speak of socialist countries such as Czechoslovakia and Poland.<sup>70</sup> A fortunate minority had the opportunity to travel abroad to meet their counterparts and attend film festivals.<sup>71</sup> Not for at least two decades had foreign films been so artistically influential as they were in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Certainly, the showing of “trophy films” confiscated in German-speaking countries (released to make up for the chronic dearth of new Soviet movies) had ensured that Western-produced films never disappeared completely from the Soviet screen, even in the isolationist postwar years. But it was crowd-pleasers such as *Tarzan* that had been in circulation.<sup>72</sup> Now, professionals knew all the key auteurs, sometimes personally; among a broader public, stars such as Jean-Paul Belmondo, Brigitte Bardot, and Gina Lollobrigida were household names, and regularly featured in the popular audience magazine *Soviet Screen*.

Yet overall, as a sponsor of the arts, Khrushchev proved disappointing. His commitment to freedom of expression was at best ambiguous, and his tastes and language crude. The promotion of egalitarian collectivism expressed in, for instance, the *Moral Code of the Soviet Person*, launched at the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (“one for all and all for one”) was anything but permissive in effect for creative artists. Once eccentricity in dress and behavior became “social deviance” and the absence of regular employment in a state institution “parasitism,” those working in creative professions lost the automatic “intelligentsia” status they had under Stalin.<sup>73</sup> The trial of poet and freelance translator Joseph Brodsky in 1963 became a nationwide cause célèbre that, for Brodsky’s supporters, illustrated the threat posed by contemporary social control to creative talent.<sup>74</sup>

Khrushchev’s eventual fall from power on October 14, 1964, was as sensational in its way as the demise of his former patron eleven years earlier. Never before had a Soviet leader been summarily dismissed from the scene. But hopes that a more consistently permissive cultural policy might follow his ousting soon dissipated. Criticism of the Stalin years was one casualty: to “savor the mistakes” (*smakovat nedostatki*) of the

<sup>69</sup> For the phrase “cinematic autarky” with relation to the USSR, see Claire Knight, “Enemy Films on Soviet Screens: Trophy Films during the Early Cold War, 1947–52,” *Kritika* 18: 1 (2017), 125–149. For the impact of international contact, see, e.g., Marsha Siefert, “Soviet Cinematic Internationalism and Socialist Filmmaking, 1955–1972,” in Patryk Baberacki and Austin Jersild (eds.), *Socialist Internationalism in the Cold War: Exploring the Second World* (Basingstoke, 2016), 161–193; Gilburd, *To See Paris and Die*; Stefano Pisu, *La cortina di celluloido: Il cinema italo-sovietico nella Guerra fredda* (Milan, 2019).

<sup>70</sup> I have listed here the countries with most traction among Soviet filmmakers: East Germany, for instance, was better known for its film equipment (supplied to all the main studios) than for its film output, though coproductions with DEFA were common (an example is Vitaly Melnikov’s drama about a Soviet historian, *Two Lines of Small Type*).

<sup>71</sup> The main examples of this at Lenfilm were Grigory Kozintsev, whose adaptations of *Don Quixote*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear* brought him international renown, and, in the 1970s, Gleb Panfilov. Otherwise, Lenfilm directors mainly traveled to socialist countries.

<sup>72</sup> See Knight, “Enemy Films on Soviet Screens.”

<sup>73</sup> This point is made forcefully in Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Soviet Culture: A Study of Practices* (Berkeley, 1999).

<sup>74</sup> Olga Edelman, “Protsess Iosifa Brodskogo,” *Novyi Mir* 1 (2007), [http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi\\_mi/2007/1/ei11.html](http://magazines.russ.ru/novyi_mi/2007/1/ei11.html).

Soviet past was not acceptable.<sup>75</sup> Social criticism and political and social nonconformity provoked alarm mingled with irritation. The arrest in 1965 and conviction a year later for “anti-Soviet agitation” of the writers Andrei Siniavsky and Yury Daniel made the repressive drift unmistakable.<sup>76</sup>

Over the next fifteen years, expulsion from the Soviet Union and compulsory psychiatric treatment joined the traditional stint in a labor camp and exile within the USSR as deterrents.<sup>77</sup> The search for alternative artistic forms disappeared into the newly created “underground,” “unofficial culture,” or “second culture” of samizdat (the clandestine circulation of banned or unpublishable books) and *kvartirniki* (apartment exhibitions and concerts). The lure of imaginative otherness, such as the cult of Western music and fashion, held among those who had little interest in politics.<sup>78</sup>

An authoritative recent study of post-Stalinist Soviet history devotes only one chapter to the two decades after 1964, under the indicative title “The Long Decline.”<sup>79</sup> For Andrei Amalrik (1938–1980), writing in 1969, the picture seemed even bleaker:

We have obviously now reached the dead end when the concept of power is associated not with any particular doctrine, or with the leader’s personality, or with tradition, but simply with power for power’s sake. . . . The regime is not on the offensive, it is on the defensive. Its motto is Don’t Touch Us and We Won’t touch You. Its goal is for everything to stay as it was. It is probably the most humane goal that the regime has set itself for the last half-century, but at the same time the least appealing.<sup>80</sup>

Fifteen years later, the poet Olga Sedakova, just over a decade younger than Amalrik, painted a comparably depressing picture of the Brezhnev era as “gray terror” and stultification of the arts:

The “second culture” created by the generations forced into silence does not permit either the grand style of public life “among aliens” or the grand style of solitude. It

<sup>75</sup> See Nikolai Koposov, *Pamyat strogogo rezhima* (M., 2011); Polly Jones, *Myth, Memory, Trauma: Rethinking the Stalinist Past in the Soviet Union* (New Haven, 2013); Alexander Etkind, *Warped Mourning: Stories of the Undead in the Land of the Unburied* (Stanford, 2013).

<sup>76</sup> For a firsthand account of the Siniavsky-Daniel case, see Igor Golomstock, *A Ransomed Dissident: Life and Art under the Soviets* (London, 2018).

<sup>77</sup> On political dissidence and the response to it from the Soviet authorities, see, e.g., Lyudmila Alekseeva, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston, 1990); Firsov, *Raznomyslie v SSSR*; Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Soviet Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Benjamin Nathans, “Soviet Rights Talk in the Post-Stalin Era,” in Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann (ed.), *Human Rights in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2011), 166–190; Maïke Lehmann, “Redefining Community in the Late Soviet Union,” *Slavic Review* 74: 1 (2015), 9–31; Benjamin Nathans, “Talking Fish: On Soviet Dissident Memoirs,” *Journal of Modern History* 87 (2015), 579–614; Barbara Martin, *Dissident Histories in the Soviet Union: From De-Stalinization to Perestroika* (London, 2019).

<sup>78</sup> There is a large and growing literature on nonconformist art in the Brezhnev era, including both a lively tradition of memoirs, e.g., *Sumerki Saigona*, ed. Yu. Valieva (SPb., 2009), and a multinational historiography, e.g. Kirill Rogov (ed.), *Semidesiatye kak predmet issledovaniya russkoi kul’tury* (M., 1998); Stanislav Savitsky, *Andergraund: istoriya i mify leningradskoi neofitsialnoi literatury* (M., 2002); Ann Komaromi, *Uncensored: Samizdat Novels and the Quest for Autonomy in Soviet Dissidence* (Evanston, IL, 2015); Josephine von Zitzewitz, *Poetry and the Religious-Philosophical Seminar in Leningrad, 1974–1980: Music for a Deaf Age* (Oxford, 2015).

<sup>79</sup> Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children*.

<sup>80</sup> Andrei Amalrik, *Prosushchestvuet li Sovetskii Soyuz do 1984 g.?* (Amsterdam, 1970), <http://www.vehi.net/politika/amalrik.html>.

signifies bigger or smaller circles of “people like us,” and is the worst possible environment for creative development. If the gray terror, the silent coercion of creative people into thinking they don’t exist, had lasted five years, perhaps even ten, of their lives, it might even have been a productive experience. A particularly demanding writer might even impose on him- or herself the nine years of Horace’s self-exile from society. But in big doses and with nothing to predict in advance their size and duration, it is nothing less than a test of heroism, and artistically gifted people are not usually equal to such a challenge, nor should one expect them to be. And most poets from the “second culture” either give up writing altogether or keep doing “the same only worse” over the years.<sup>81</sup>

The political climate was chilly in the film world also. At the Twenty-Third Congress of the Communist Party, the cinema’s ideological deviations encountered “sharp and serious criticism,” as a lead article in *The Art of Cinema* reported in the summer of 1966. The “revolutionary and class tension” of Soviet films was now considered their defining feature.<sup>82</sup> In August 1967, drafts for a new cinema statute lamented the absence of “heroic and romantic style” in recent times, and lambasted the “self-conscious complexity and subjectivism” of Andrei Tarkovsky’s *Andrei Rublev*.<sup>83</sup> A further draft of February 1968 criticized “departure from the traditions of politically passionate, civic filmmaking” and the prevalence of “broken heroes shut out from an active life in society and absorbed in a narrow world of individualist experiences.”<sup>84</sup> Emphasis was switching from what the cinema might achieve to what it had got wrong.

After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the atmosphere soured further. The September 1968 number of *The Art of Cinema* included an editorial lambasting the “false ideological positions” expressed by “certain figures from Czech film and literature,” and particularly “deheroicization” and representation of “people who seem to stand on the mere verge of life’s highway.”<sup>85</sup> Another article in the number singled out Kira Muratova’s *The Long Goodbye* as an example of a film that might be lifelike, but was lacking in significance.<sup>86</sup> Pursuit of supposedly “anti-Soviet” material, expressed in public denunciations of films and directors and by interference in scripts and finished films, accelerated vigorously. An ever-longer list of films was “shelved”—stopped in production, rejected when completed, or removed from the screen.<sup>87</sup> Another group of inconvenient movies was placed on restricted circulation—passing unnoticed in the press, denied lavish premieres or indeed celebratory openings of any kind, and left to circulate in film clubs and other small-scale venues (what scriptwriter

<sup>81</sup> Olga Sedakova, “O pogibshem literaturnom pokolenii. Pamyati Leni Gubanova” (1984). <http://olgasedakova.com/Poetica/1101>.

<sup>82</sup> “Deistvie proiskhodit segodnya,” *IK* 7 (1966), 1–2.

<sup>83</sup> *KO*, 89–94.

<sup>84</sup> *KO*, 98.

<sup>85</sup> “V interesakh druzhby,” *IK* 9 (1968), 1–4.

<sup>86</sup> A. Mikhalevich, “Esteticheskie paradoksy,” *IK* 9 (1968), 8.

<sup>87</sup> The professional slang term “shelve” (*postavit na polku*) referred to the actual fate of the film negative, which was removed from the studio where it had originally been produced and stored in the State Film Archive (Gosfilmofond) at Belye Stolby, near Moscow. See Fomin, *Polka*, 5. I avoid using the term “banned” here because to the anglophone ear it suggests removal from the screen, only one possible meaning of “shelving” (and a relatively uncommon outcome).

Yury Klepikov called “painted into a distribution corner”).<sup>88</sup> Between 1963 and the mid-1970s, the staff of Goskino nearly doubled in size, an indication of the agency’s increasingly energetic activities.<sup>89</sup>

Film was more dependent than any other art on state funding. It was also dominated by “professionals” in the Soviet sense—those who had received a higher education in the subject. Certainly, the state had long provided support to amateur filmmakers through the sponsorship of official societies, and the movement became more prominent from 1957 onward, when public viewings were organized at occasions such as the World Festival of Youth. By the 1980s, Lomofilm, based at the Leningrad Optics Factory, had established a lively tradition of documentary shorts.<sup>90</sup> But feature films represented a very different type of challenge for amateurs. They were humorously mocked in Sergei Dovlatov’s story “The Driving Gloves,” where the editor of the Lenfilm studio newspaper, *Frame*, cadged a camera and some costumes so he could make a film about a visit to Soviet Leningrad by the city’s founder, Peter the Great. The name of the amateur director in question, Schlippenbach (which, to the Russian ear, had a ludicrous ring), not to speak of the film’s ridiculous premise, undermined any sense that making films outside the state system was artistically viable.<sup>91</sup> Studio theaters, folk choruses, and jazz orchestras all had at least some leverage in the Soviet cultural establishment. A writer dissatisfied with the status quo could take the traditional recourse of working without immediate hope of publication (“writing for the desk drawer”). Painters and photographers could show their work at underground exhibitions. Even architects could exercise their imaginations by embellishing a dacha, say. If film directors alienated their sponsors, their career was over—and nonconformity risked casting into disgrace everyone else involved with the film as well, including the studio management and even the technicians.<sup>92</sup> Clandestine films emerged only on the cusp of glasnost and operated in the same limited milieu as “apartment exhibitions,” with grainy footage projected on screens made of sheets.<sup>93</sup> Precisely because of this state dependence, members of the oppositional intelligentsia tended to combine reverence for art films generally with scorn for the home product. “We thought everything Soviet was second rate,” as Mikhail Meilakh remembered.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Yury Klepikov, “Prervannyi polet,” *IK* 3 (1999), 52–54. I discuss this kind of “soft ban” extensively in chapters 1 and 2 as well as in chapters 10 and 15.

<sup>89</sup> For the figures (four hundred in 1963 and over seven hundred “under Ermash”), see Fomin, *KO*, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Two of the shorts, the uncredited *Ne vezet* and *Brutto*, made by S. Tovstukha, I. Zhorov, A. Pesok, A. Lapin, and V. Geroev, are available with an introduction from Aleksandr Shcherbanosov on <http://www.iskusstvo.tv/Kino/Nevidannoe-kino-ne-vezet-brutto.html>. See also M. Vinogradova, “Between the State and the Kino: Amateur Film Workshops in the Soviet Union,” *Studies in European Cinema* 8: 3 (2012), 211–225, and J. Järvinen, *Vzglyad v proshloe: kratkaya istoriya razvitiya kinolyubitelstva v byvshem SSSR i v stranakh Baltii* (Tallinn, 2005).

<sup>91</sup> It was very difficult for amateurs to obtain equipment and film stock (e.g., 16 mm film that allowed the easy recording of a soundtrack) and to develop finished films. Those making them almost always belonged to hobby clubs in factories, institutes, and so on. Short documentaries commemorating revolutionary and war anniversaries, or portraying special events in the workplace (field trips, etc.) were the norm.

<sup>92</sup> In chapter 2, I discuss several cases where the sacking of the studio director was directly related to problems with the adverse reception by Goskino and other government and Party bodies of films in production.

<sup>93</sup> See Vinogradova, “Between the State and the Kino”; M. Zhezhelienko, “‘Novaya volna’ ili devyatyi val?,” in Zhezhelienko, *Peterburgskoe “novoe kino”*, 15–16. Aggressively asserting their “amateur” practices at the outset as an avant-garde gesture, some leaders of the “parallel cinema” (e.g., Evgeny Yufit in Leningrad) assimilated to the professional world once this became more permissive, in the late 1980s.

<sup>94</sup> Personal inf. Compare Joseph Brodsky’s recollection of “some semirestricted viewing” of Visconti’s *Death in Venice* that sparked his interest in the city (Solomon Volkov, *Conversations with Brodsky*, trans.

All the same, to represent Brezhnev-era filmmaking simply as a period of enhanced repression—what one film specialist has called “calcification”—is to go too far.<sup>95</sup> The sheer quantity of films that did not make it through the reviewing process is testament to divisions of taste and clashes of ideological and artistic priority. Well-run censorship systems, such as those functioning in the literary world, were precisely intended to ensure that the officials working to control output were not embarrassed by subversive material.<sup>96</sup> The tight restrictions on the cinema industry could, paradoxically, provide a certain freedom of maneuver. Added to this, rather than remaining stable, the criteria of control in the film industry actually modulated extensively in the Brezhnev years—and that was the whole problem. The formulas of Party decrees and bureaucratic reports, “ideological and artistic quality,” papered over significant questions about the extent to which those features were compatible. Film regulatory bodies and Party leaders remained equally, or indeed increasingly, committed to encouraging “new talent” and “young filmmakers,” and continued to call for more films about contemporary life—of just the kind that regularly ended up shelved.<sup>97</sup> As scriptwriter Grigory Baklanov wryly observed in 1978, “It’s easy to turn this film into a work of genius—all you have to do is to ban it.” The joke summed up the institutional dilemmas of the time.<sup>98</sup>

The emphasis on “youth film” in the late 1950s and early 1960s acted as a constraint on, as well as an encouragement to, young filmmakers. The standard image of “youth”—joyful, energetic, spontaneous—allowed the evolution of radically new types of representation (from new kinds of body language up to the use of handheld camera). However, the insistency of the psychological stereotype also stigmatized low-key emotional registers such as reflectiveness and restraint, let alone sadness or detachment. In this respect, things became slightly easier under Brezhnev: memory politics expanded to include commemoration of the war dead, and there was a move away from the all-out commitment to radical collectivism that characterized the so-called Thaw.<sup>99</sup>

The output of Lenfilm clearly shows the ways in which the aesthetics of the Brezhnev-era cinema encouraged, rather than inhibiting, work by young people. It was exactly at this point when the studio had some of its biggest creative successes. Films such as Naum Birman’s *Chronicle of a Dive-Bomber* (1967), Gleb Panfilov’s *No Path through*

Marian Schwartz [New York, 1996], 191), or the prose writer Reed Grachev’s enthusiasm for Antonioni. I remember myself that when, in the early 1980s, I praised Tarkovsky’s work to a Leningrader from semidissident circles, he sighed and said that it was all very unoriginal compared with Bergman. Future film critic Evgeny Margolit, when a graduate student at the Theater Institute in Leningrad, argued at a Filmmakers’ Union meeting on the “modern hero” in 1976 that the only recent Soviet film of any real individuality was Andrei Konchalovsky’s *A Lover’s Romance* (1974) (TsGALI-SPb., f. 183, op. 1–3, d. 323, ll. 40–41). Nearly forty years later, his history, *Zhivye i mertvoe*, pointedly ceased discussion at the end of the 1960s.

<sup>95</sup> Woll, *Real Images*, 201–209 (quotation 209).

<sup>96</sup> See Samantha Sherry, *Discourses of Regulation and Resistance: Censoring Translation in the Stalin and Khrushchev-Era Soviet Union* (Edinburgh, 2015).

<sup>97</sup> See, for example, S. Bondarchuk, “Gotovit nashe zavtra,” *IK 2* (1976), 18–21; “Povorot k sovremennoi teme,” *IK 1* (1976), 1–17.

<sup>98</sup> Grigory Baklanov commenting on Kira Muratova’s *Getting to Know the Wide World* at the Artistic Council of the First Creative Unit, November 28, 1978, SD, op. 31, d. 33, l. 199.

<sup>99</sup> On memory politics, see L. Kaganovsky, “Postmemory, Countermemory: Soviet Cinema of the 1960s,” in A. E. Gorsuch and D. Koenker (eds.), *The Soviet Sixties* (Bloomington, IN, 2013), 235–250. O. Klimova, “Soviet Youth Films under Brezhnev: Watching between the Lines,” PhD dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2013, 11–12, points to the dissatisfaction with existing systems of values as a key feature of this period. A nuanced discussion of ruptures and continuities between the 1960s and 1970s is given by the contributors to *Semidesyatye kak predmet istorii russkoi kultury*, ed. K. Yu. Rogov (M., 1998).

*Fire* (1968), Ilya Averbakh's *Monologue* (1972), Dinara Asanova's *Woodpeckers Don't Get Headaches* (1974), and Aleksei German's *Twenty Days without War* (1976), to mention just a few, were some of the most widely discussed cultural events of the era. If these films seem unfamiliar now, that is at least partly because perceptions of Soviet cinema have been retrospectively shaped by glasnost-era releases of previously shelved films and by the repertoire of "classic movies" on post-Soviet TV. While a canon of masterpieces previously hidden from view dominated discussion of Soviet film in the 1990s and 2000s, more recently it has been the so-called genre movies (particularly the comedies of Leonid Gaidai and Eldar Ryazanov), mostly made in Moscow, that have been at the forefront of screenings and analytical commentaries.<sup>100</sup>

It is certainly true that in the course of the 1970s, calls from Goskino and Party for "variety of genres" became louder. In response, Goskino's film-vetting department, the Chief SEC, was reorganized so that editors "curated" particular themes or genres—contemporary films, comedies, children's films, and so on—rather than monitoring the output of specific studios.<sup>101</sup> The background to this was increased pressure on the film industry to justify state outlay with impact on audiences. On December 2, 1965, in line with the economic reforms proposed by Anatoly Kosygin at the Plenum of the Central Committee in September 1965, and aimed at generating financial stimuli in Soviet industry generally,<sup>102</sup> incentive payments (*nadbavki*) were introduced in film studios, which would now receive supplements for films in certain preferred categories. The payments covered a bonus for the crew; the residuum could be spent on the studio's running costs. Alongside "ideological-artistic level," the categories of preference were "number of viewers, and of countries purchasing rights."<sup>103</sup>

The monetization of political probity was nothing new. As in the Stalin era, so in the early 1960s, the classification of films into first, second, third, and fourth class, accompanied by financial rewards for those in the top groups, had been related to "ideological value" as well as to a film's artistic level and its "creative originality." However, the link between achievement and payment had previously been less blatant.<sup>104</sup> Added to this, the key trigger for financial rewards from Goskino was now the popularity (for which read, profitability) of a movie, something unprecedented in the Soviet cinema. Another important step was the founding in 1966 of the Experimental Studio, an

<sup>100</sup> For discussions of "shelved" films, see, e.g., Margolit, *Zhivye i mertvye*, 383–538, which devotes extensive attention to, for example, Askoldov's *The Commissar*; on genre cinema, Alexander Prokhorov and Elena Prokhorova, *Film and Television Genres of the Late Soviet Era* (London, 2017). As for the Moscow dominance, it is notable that even a vox pop among specialists focussing on little-known masterpieces, Julian Graffy and others, "A Hundred Years of Russian Film: The Forgotten and the Under-rated," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 2: 3 (2008), 327–354, included fifteen Moscow-made Soviet films (ten from MF) and just three from Leningrad (one LF), and one from Kiev and one Georgian film.

<sup>101</sup> For changing attitudes to relations with the audience, see Joshua First, "From Spectator to 'Differentiated' Consumer: Film Audience Research in the Era of Developed Socialism (1965–1980)," *Kritika* 9: 2 (2008), 317–344. On the reorganization of Goskino, see the comments by Igor Sadchikov in Godet, *La pellicule*, 259.

<sup>102</sup> On the impact of the reforms in the world of journalism, where they revived the science of reader sociology, abandoned in the 1930s, see Simon Huxtable, "In Search of the Soviet Reader: The Kosygin Reforms, Sociology, and Changing Concepts of Soviet Society, 1964–1970," *Cahiers du monde russe* 54 (2013), 623–642.

<sup>103</sup> Decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, December 2, 1965, quoted in PA, d. 75, l. 22.

<sup>104</sup> "Polozhenie o poryadke rabochei komissii dlya opredeleniya grupp po oplate kinofilmov i ob osnovnykh printsipakh otneseniya kinofilmov k gruppam po oplate," Council of Ministers of the USSR, April 25, 1961, SD, op. 18, d. 1, ll. 1–5 ob. On the Stalin era, see Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan*.

independent production unit commissioning services from studios, with its own budget and autonomous editorial control.<sup>105</sup>

This particular experiment failed. As a review of 1968 observed, “When it was an emergency, things worked all right, but studios have only with the greatest reluctance agreed to include projects in their plan and to take responsibility for them.” Added to this, the studio had developed no overall “signature,” with some projects tame, and others—Aleksandr Askoldov’s *The Commissar* (*Komissar*) (1967)—outrageous.<sup>106</sup> Its eventual fate was an afterlife under the umbrella of Mosfilm, where the creative units were in any case allowed a specific individual profile (as indicated in their names, for example, “Youth”) and more budgetary and managerial leeway than those elsewhere. Experimentation was all very well, but best allowed to institutions in the immediate curtilage of the ministerial and Party hierarchy.

Yet the monetization of cultural resources continued, now through the medium of tightened budget control alongside promised rewards. An early sign of the new environment was a meeting of the Artistic Council of Goskino held on March 4–5, 1970, at which Aleksei Romanov, then chairman of Goskino, emphasized the importance of two new policy documents: a recent directive on economy in industry, and the conclusion to the state budget of the USSR in 1970. This latter had singled out the cinema industry for criticism as wasteful in using resources, underlined the need for economy, and sharply criticized a list of films that had gone over budget.<sup>107</sup> On August 12, 1970, the Council of Ministers issued a decree on financial regulation, ordering tighter budget control.<sup>108</sup> From now on, films that were not released represented not just missed opportunities to do better, but positive liabilities: the cost of such a film would be passed back to the studio, causing financial headaches and possibly even actual deficit.<sup>109</sup> It is often argued that the Brezhnev era saw the replacement of the utopian “new man” of the Khrushchev era by Homo economicus: in the film industry, the incentives to espouse the latter’s set of values rapidly mounted.<sup>110</sup>

In theory, ideological value, international artistic renown, and mass appeal should have been compatible, and films popular within the Soviet Union, with their high moral standards and humane perceptions, should have enjoyed popularity across the globe. Chukhrai’s *The Ballad of a Soldier*, which garnered critical laurels at home and abroad, as well as enjoying huge popularity, was the ever-cited case.<sup>111</sup> But *Ballad* was exemplary rather than typical. Kalatozov’s *The Cranes Are Flying* had an enormous impact on

<sup>105</sup> “O rabote eksperimentalnoi kinostudii,” June 24, 1968, RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 496, l. 176. See also N. Markov, “Eksperiment v sovetskoi kinematografii: Eksperimentalnoe tvorcheskoe obyedinenie v 1965–1976 gg.,” *Genesis: istoricheskie issledovaniia* 1 (2018), 102–111.

<sup>106</sup> “O rabote,” l. 180, l. 200. *The Commissar*, a “serious flop” from Goskino’s point of view (l. 200) represents one of the most famous examples of a “shelved” film.

<sup>107</sup> RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 700a, l. 36.

<sup>108</sup> “Postanovlenie SM SSSR ob usilenii kontrolya za rashkudovaniem kinostudiyami gosudarstvennykh sredstv na postanovku kinofilmov,” August 12, 1970, RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 705, ll. 2–4.

<sup>109</sup> As happened at Lenfilm in 1971. See chapter 2.

<sup>110</sup> On the rise of Homo economicus, see R. V. Ryvkina, *Drama peremen* (M., 2001), 270–290; J. Bockmann, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford, 2011), chap. 2; Sergei Alymov, “Activating the Human Factor? The Late-Soviet Roots of Neoliberal Subjectivity,” *Forum for Anthropology and Culture* 14 (2018), 137–168.

<sup>111</sup> The only place where Chukhrai’s film (like Sergei Bondarchuk’s admired war film *The Fate of a Man*) had a poor reception was China, where it was considered to manifest “a negative attitude to the war” (RGANI, f. 5, op. 36, d. 129, l. 130, June 28, 1960).

filmmakers—many directors of the 1960s and 1970s traced their interest in cinema to watching that film—and artistically aware members of the general public.<sup>112</sup> However, it was not a big hit with ordinary Soviet viewers. On the other hand, Eldar Ryazanov's *Carnival Night* (1956), unremarked outside the USSR, provided the kind of digestible, well-crafted entertainment that pleased generations of filmgoers. The pan-Soviet ambitions of the Stalin or indeed Khrushchev eras (any great work of art should reach the entire people and nation, *narod*) were replaced by something more like market segmentation, the recognition of inevitable diversity in reception.<sup>113</sup>

Thus, the award of a State Prize had nothing like the impact of the Stalin Prize that it replaced. It guaranteed the studio some positive mentions in political speeches, but did not promote the given work of art to a niche in the national treasure house. And it certainly did not guarantee rapt audiences. Much though Brezhnev and his colleagues might strive for consensual politics (and in some respects achieve it),<sup>114</sup> consensus in the cultural world regularly eluded them. Indeed, it is questionable whether Party leaders even considered it a realistic objective. During the Stalin era and under Khrushchev, public culture had been informed by the sense of a shared ideological mission. By the 1970s, this had given way, in practice at least, to a constrained and grudging pluralism backed up, behind closed doors, by a good deal of ideological uncertainty.<sup>115</sup>

The film world, too, was riven by difference. The Soviet public liked thrillers and fantasies: Soviet critics did not, finding them “repetitive” and “stereotyped.” Figures for ticket sales in Moscow over the first half of 1967 indicated that the domestically produced box-office hit was the latest in Leonid Gaidai's series of burlesques starring Aleksandr Demyanenko as the gormless Shurik. With over 3.8 million viewers in under three months, the film eclipsed even its nearest runners-up, such as the Spanish director Rafael Gil's 1962 movie *La reina del Chantecler* (2.8 million viewers in five months), a spy drama involving a glamorous chanteuse's adventures during and after the First World War, and Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (2.3 million viewers in three months). Several Soviet movies (among others, Edmond Keosayan's Civil War drama *The Elusive Avengers* [MF 1966] and Herbert Rappaport's *Two Tickets for the Matinee* [LF 1967]) managed well over a million sales. With just over five hundred thousand tickets sold in four months, the second instalment of Sergei Bondarchuk's sumptuous *War and Peace* (MF 1967) led the pack of “serious” movies. By comparison, the film version of Shostakovich's opera *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (LF, 1967) could manage only one hundred thousand viewings in three months.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> For the impact of the film on the Soviet public generally, see R. Frumkina, “Bez narkoza,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 100 (2009), <http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2009/100/fr17.html>.

<sup>113</sup> An early example of this was the detailed discussion at Goskino in 1965 by D. S. Pisarevsky, chief editor of *SE*, of the magazine's annual viewer surveys, pointing to different ratings among city and country dwellers, men and women, and so on (RGALI, f. 2944, op. 1, d. 214, ll. 54–58). For the rise of viewer sociology in the 1970s, see chapter 2. On increased pluralism in Soviet culture generally at this period, see D. Kretzschmar, *Die sowjetische Kulturpolitik 1970–1985: Von der verwalteten zur selbstverwalteten Kultur. Analyse und Dokumentation* (Bochum, 1993); K. Eimermacher, M. Ratgauz, *Politika i kultura pri Brezhneve, Andropove i Chernenko* (M., 1997).

<sup>114</sup> This is the central argument in S. Schattenberg, *Leonid Breschnew: Staatsmann und Schauspieler im Schatten Stalins: Eine Biografie* (Vienna, 2017). On Brezhnev's “inclusionary politics,” see also Y. Brudny, *Reinventing Russia: Russian Nationalism and the Soviet State, 1953–1991* (Cambridge, MA, 2000).

<sup>115</sup> On ideological conflict and uncertainty among top-level Party officials and academics, see Alymov, “Activating the Human Factor?”; C. Humphrey, “The ‘Creative Bureaucrat’: Conflicts in the Production of Communist Party Discourse,” *Inner Asia* 10 (2008), 1, 5–35.

<sup>116</sup> “Demonstirovalis na ekranakh v 1966–1967 gg.,” *IK* 1 (1968), 7–8.

*War and Peace* was a “state commission,” showered with government largesse, its budget eight times the average per meter. It was the ultimate “prestige film.”<sup>117</sup> But even it could not compete with thrillers, comedies, and musicals. Squaring foreign and Soviet taste was another tricky issue. In April 1966, just a few months after the decree on incentive payments, a meeting in the Cinema Committee noted that the reception of the Soviet Film Week in Italy had been disappointing. The “bourgeois press,” “with ill-concealed Schadenfreude,” had condemned the program as stodgy and mediocre: “Gray, boring life appears before the viewers on the screen.” Critics had castigated the preoccupation with “suffering and horror,” and the “abandonment of the astonishing examples of courage and heroism for which they [Soviet filmmakers] had formerly been renowned.”<sup>118</sup> On November 29, 1966, Igor Chekin of Goskino noted that foreign demand for Soviet films had collapsed, in socialist as well as capitalist countries.<sup>119</sup>

The preoccupation with audience appeal was not driven only by the desire for a return on the state’s investment. Viewing statistics for Soviet audiences were supposed to indicate whether the film’s message had gone home.<sup>120</sup> International distribution brought in hard currency that could be used to purchase technology and raw materials, but it was also crucial to the nation’s symbolic status. Cold War competition focused as much on claims to the moral high ground as on possession of military hardware, and artistic excellence was a central weapon of victory in the obsessive “alternative systems” comparison of the day. Just as Western political leaders looked enviously at Soviet achievements in the field of education, so they conceded the world-leading role of some of the arts, above all classical music and ballet.<sup>121</sup> On the other hand, “official” Soviet literature, painting, and sculpture were regarded less with awe than with condescension. Cinema lay somewhere in the middle. Since the 1920s, it had been artistically ambitious films such as *Battleship Potemkin* that spelled “Soviet cinema” to a world public. Soyuzeksportfilm, the foreign distribution body, was well aware of this, and it was precisely films such as *Lady Macbeth* (shown at the Edinburgh Film Festival in the year of its release) that were selected as recent Soviet cinema’s “face to the West.”<sup>122</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Prokhorov and Prokhorova, *Film and Television Genres*, 24–41.

<sup>118</sup> As reported to a Lenfilm studio-wide Party meeting, April 27, 1966, PA, d. 75, l. 43.

<sup>119</sup> “Protokol Otchetno-vybornogo part. sobr. studii LF,” November 29, 1966, PA, d. 75, l. 198.

<sup>120</sup> Exactly this point was made in the draft for a new cinema statute dating from August 3, 1966, KO, 77: “Very often important films are created without thought for the interest of viewers, which reduces the ideological impact of these films on the viewer.” As Joshua First points out (“From Spectator to ‘Differentiated Consumer,’” 333–339), in the late 1970s, film critics expressed increasing scepticism about the “differentiated model” of the Soviet spectator. In 1981, Filipp Ermash also returned to a generalized view of spectators as requiring moral guidance in “Povysit rol’ kino v kommunisticheskom vospitanii trudyashchikhsya,” *IK* 10 (1981), 10. At times of geopolitical crisis (Czechoslovakia in 1968, Afghanistan in 1979), “communist education” was restored as the core model of relations between film production and audience.

<sup>121</sup> On cultural exchanges in music (at a slightly earlier period, but these patterns continued into the 1980s), see Kiril Tomoff, *Virtuosi Abroad: Soviet Music and Imperial Competition during the Early Cold War, 1945–1958* (Ithaca, NY, 2015): on ballet, Ezrahi, *Swans in the Kremlin*.

<sup>122</sup> This policy was sometimes criticized: for instance, A. Mikhalevich, “Estesticheskie paradoksy,” *IK* 9 (1968), 5, wondered rhetorically whether the Soviet Union was not “exposing its own ills” by taking abroad films such as Aleksandr Zarkhi’s *Anna Karenina*, which had been selected for showing at the May 1968 Cannes Film Festival. (The film was never in fact screened because the festival closed almost immediately after it opened on May 10, 1968, when Jean-Luc Godard and Claude Lelouch rushed onstage to call for a shut-down in solidarity with striking workers and students, but Mikhalevich and *IK*’s editors appear not to have known this or to have considered it irrelevant.)

In promoting films suitable for foreign distribution and those with large audiences, the December 2, 1965, legislation in practice established three different tracks to success, of which ideological significance was only one. The major events of Soviet history and contemporary life were to be honored by “films of significance” (*znachitelnye filmy*).<sup>123</sup> But films could legitimately also aim to be “box office hits” (*kassovye*) or “viewer-friendly movies” (*zritelskie filmy*), or, indeed, “quality cinema” such as adaptations of the classics that did not directly address issues of burning topicality, but did make intellectual demands on viewers.<sup>124</sup>

Thus, analyzing Soviet film in terms of an opposition between “auteur cinema” and “genre” (or “art house” and “mainstream”) in significant ways obscures the context in which Soviet studios went about their work. In the post-Soviet period, the term “auteur cinema” (*avtorskoe kino*) was ubiquitous (along with “auteur cuisine”). But in Soviet parlance, every film director (and screenwriter) was an “auteur” (*avtor*). Even the most egotistical directors recognized the participation of their collaborators, particularly camera operators, designers, and composers. Many worked with scripts that they had been assigned by the studio. Soviet film authors resembled less polymathic modernist artists such as Picasso than Renaissance painters surrounded by assistants and collaborators; their model of creation was pre-, or more accurately post-, Romantic.

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the standard expectation on the part of the film commissioning and vetting agencies remained—just as in the Stalin era—that studios would plan their output in terms of “themes.” The category “historical-revolutionary film” embraced films as different in terms of genre and artistic ambition as Yury Vyshinsky’s *The Salvo of the Aurora* (1965, a standard piece of Soviet heroic myth), Aleksandr Ivanov and Evgeny Shiffers’s *The Pathfinders of Pervorossiisk* (1967, eagerly anticipated by the government and Party hierarchy, then branded “formalist”), Gleb Panfilov’s *No Path through Fire* (a political success as well as a radically innovative piece of filmmaking), and Iskander Khamraev’s *In the Black Sands* (1972), an elegantly filmed and extravagantly acted “Eastern” adventure movie showing the Bolsheviks of Turkestan as goodies versus the baddy *basmachi*, or prerevolutionary rural elite.

Of the four films, it was Panfilov’s and Ivanov and Shiffers’s that were most admired in the studio. Lenfilm—as could be said of other Soviet studios also, particularly, perhaps, Georgia Film and the Baltic studios—aimed above all to produce “art cinema,” or to use the term current in the studio itself, “serious cinema.” “Serious cinema” could and often did include comedy—for which the studio was famous. But whatever it made, the studio was committed to “quality.”

It is, accordingly, films that were regarded as artistically successful, irrespective of genre or the presence or absence of avant-garde techniques, on which I focus here. My

<sup>123</sup> For example, Gleb Panfilov’s *No Path through Fire* was described in a Lenfilm studio Party committee report of 1968 as “one of the significant films of the year” (i.e., to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War): PA, d. 89, l. 198.

<sup>124</sup> On the rise of the *kassovyi film*, see Birgit Beumers (ed.), “Soviet and Russian Blockbusters,” *Slavic Review* 62: 3 (2003), 441–525, and Prokhorov and Prokhorova, *Film and Television Genres*. Stephen M. Norris, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia: Movies, Memory, and Patriotism* (Bloomington, IN, 2012), argues that blockbusters as such emerged only in the post-Soviet period; be that as it may, market-directed film production was starting to be an important fact of life by early in the 1970s. On literary adaptations as a manifestation of the “quality film,” see my chapter 18 on Maslennikov. For the comments on the importance of “quality” in US and UK TV production, see Máire Messenger Davies, “Production Studies,” *Critical Studies in Television* 1: 1 (2006), 21–30.

aim throughout is to suggest what was interesting and worthwhile in a filmmaking legacy spanning three decades, rather than what was ridiculous or misguided in the effort to produce it (though plenty of the latter emerges along the way). In the first chapters of the book, I provide a sketch of Lenfilm's history as a studio over twenty-five years, between 1961—which saw the founding of “creative units,” production centers that had as a central role the nurture and guidance, in Soviet terms “moral education,” of young directors—and 1986, when the entire management of the film industry was reformed beyond recognition. The first two chapters deal with what Soviet parlance termed “filtration,” or the ideological and economic regulation of film production; the third chapter with the technical and managerial side of moviemaking and the relationship of this with film as art form; and the fourth chapter with the specific aesthetic perceptions and principles that were applied when filmmakers and administrators tried to define the Lenfilm “brand.”

These chapters show how editorial, administrative, and manual, as well as “creative,” staff labored to create imaginative cinema while dodging and weaving between the often unpredictable and contradictory demands of the different vetting bodies. Rather than a hard-and-fast boundary between “Thaw” and “Stagnation,” we see a gradual increase of constraints over the course of the post-Stalin era, including economic as well as ideological pressure, and a worsening of the facilities in a practical sense just as demands on the studio rose. But at the same time we see an increasing confidence in the development of a particular aesthetic—small-budget, artistically sophisticated filmmaking that echoed the aims and atmosphere of late modernism in other parts of Europe at the time.<sup>125</sup> Lenfilm did produce audience-friendly movies, some of them hugely popular, such as Vladimir Chebotarev and Gennady Kazansky's enjoyably campy *Amphibian Man* (1962), with handsome Ichthiander in a silver suit played by Vladimir Korenev, and gamine beauty Anastasiya Vertinskaya as the love interest, Guttiere. But such films were almost an embarrassment to the studio—it was work for more discerning audiences that truly engaged local opinion.<sup>126</sup>

In the second part of the book, I look in detail at the filmmaking of some of the so-called young directors who arrived at Lenfilm in the two decades after Stalin's death, and particularly after the studio reorganization in 1961. Some, such as Yuly Fait and Gennady Shpalikov, and later Kira Muratova, were to make just one film in Leningrad, because the particular shape of their talent did not suit the corporate ethos of the studio. Others, such as Naum Birman and Savva Kulish, made their reputation with a first movie and never quite achieved the same level of recognition again. Boris Frumin left the studio after two films and emigrated to the United States, where he still lives.<sup>127</sup> But Gleb Panfilov, Ilya Averbakh, and Aleksei German were immediately recognized as outstanding talents and went on to careers as star directors. Others—Viktor Sokolov, Vitaly Melnikov, Sergei Mikaelyan, Viktor Tregubovich, Igor Maslennikov, and Dinara

<sup>125</sup> For the analogous process in the early sound era, where bureaucratic obstruction and infrastructural underdevelopment failed to impede (indeed, encouraged) the emergence of a highly specific film aesthetic, see Kaganovsky, *The Voice of Technology*.

<sup>126</sup> There is a substantial literature on *Amphibian Man*: see, for example, A. A. Ignatenko and V. A. Gusak, *K voprosu ob Ikhtiandre: ob ekranizatsii romana A. Belyaeva "Chelovek-amfibiya"* (SPb., 2011). On Lenfilm tastemakers' aversion to mass-market movies, see also chapter 2.

<sup>127</sup> Frumin made several more highly regarded films after his emigration, as well as teaching at the NYU Film School. He now lives in Miami.

Asanova—had a trickier path to acknowledgment, but ended up as figures of real authority. The films that these fifteen directors made—released between 1966 and 1986—helped to define Lenfilm to their colleagues and to a wider public.<sup>128</sup> Among them are movies of rich imagination and artistry that made new filmmaking styles visible to the Soviet and international public and created a new emotional vocabulary.<sup>129</sup> Some of the fifteen films at the center of my chapters presented traditional feelings and sensations (love, bravery) in new and challenging ways; others asserted emotional registers that were unfamiliar, or even unacceptable, in the film and literature of the early Soviet period. At times these experiments lay at the boundaries of permissibility, so that it was not always possible to tell in advance how the film would be received when it went through vetting or indeed when (if) it reached the public.<sup>130</sup>

As I traced filmmakers' relations within and outside the studio, I looked for ways to link the stressful and often vexed process of getting films to completion with the resulting film text itself. It was, after all, the project rather than the process that interested directors and production groups (and the studio and the wider world). Yet the process left indelible traces on the completed (or incomplete) film. What reached the public was very rarely the "director's cut," in the sense of the version originally presented to the studio vetting bodies, and later those of Party and government. But Soviet directors did not expect a film to pass through discussion unchallenged (and might have been upset had it done so, since this would by definition have suggested it was not "serious"). As further evidence of how dialogue and dispute could have creative importance, dossiers on films often indicate that this or that feature was prompted by an editor (or indeed a camera operator, composer, designer, actor, or other such collaborator). By no means every edit suggested to a (sometimes reluctant) director made the film "worse." And some directors (Dinara Asanova was a striking example) preferred collaborative methods of work. The interpretation of the results needs to engage with these factors.

Because of this emphasis on the *evolution* of films as texts, I have preferred to use as illustrations, where I can, not clips from the finished movie, but production stills—a mixture of images related to, though not always identical with, scenes in the final film, and what in Russian are called "working moments," showing members of the production group on set. The Lenfilm archive has extensive holdings of such images—unfortunately, almost always without a credit to the photographer. These are never, of course, spontaneous images. Actors and filmmakers were grouped in order to produce specific artistic effects. But they do closely relate to what directors and their workmates

<sup>128</sup> Interestingly, my list overlaps to a significant extent with that of LF younger-generation film director Oleg Kovalov, "Kino Leningrada ili leningradskoe kino?," *Seans* 4 (1991), 17–18, which I encountered only as I was completing work on this book.

<sup>129</sup> The emotional transformations of the post-Stalin era have so far received relatively little attention, though an exception is sincerity (see Petr Vail and Aleksandr Genis, *1960-e: mir sovetskogo cheloveka* (Ann Arbor, 1988); Ellen Rutten, *Sincerity after Communism: A Cultural History* (New Haven, 2017). However, my discussion has benefited from such discussions of emotional history in Russia and modern cultures more generally as Jan Plamper, *History of Emotions: An Introduction* (New York, 2015); Marc Elie, Jan Plamper, and Schamma Schahadat (eds.), *Rossiiskaya imperiya chuvstv* (M., 2010); Mark D. Steinberg and Valeria Sobol (eds.), *Interpreting Emotions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (DeKalb, IL, 2011).

<sup>130</sup> On the instability of perceptions of emotion at this period, see Polly Jones, "Breaking the Silence: Iurii Bondarev's Quietness between the 'Sincerity' and 'Civic Emotion' of the 'Thaw,'" in Steinberg and Sobol, *Interpreting Emotion*, 152–176.

intended to achieve at a particular point, and the types of framing and grouping that are used are in dialogue with the visual world of the film itself.<sup>131</sup>

Often, discussions of Soviet films present the process of “filtration” as a kind of preface to the main analysis, as though—despite annoying distractions—what is left to us now actually *were* the director’s cut, the product of his or her unmediated creative energies. I have aimed for a broader picture of film production here. But simply to document false trails and final solutions would leave the reader with a maze. Presenting case studies of films in terms of the complex of emotions that lies at their center takes us to the heart of debates: we can start to understand what it was that people in the studio and beyond were arguing *about*. It is hardly a revelation to say that late Soviet cinema appealed to the emotions of the viewer, but analytical appreciations of how it did this (as opposed to studies of “film language” or bodily culture, say) have been rare.<sup>132</sup> In fact, some films that were apparently conventional in terms of the plot situation and character types were elusive and rewarding (or frustrating) for viewers, whether in the studio or outside, precisely in terms of their engagement with emotional states that were on the edge of recognition (or, at times, recognizable in an upsetting or scandalous way).<sup>133</sup> The arguments that I record here amplify those that I explore in the initial framing chapters, which take Lenfilm from the structural reorganization of 1961 to the Filmmakers’ Union Congress of 1986 that began the total transformation, and eventual collapse, of the Soviet film industry under Gorbachev. In every instance, the final film text was created in an elaborate process of multisided argument. Contrary to the view of the solitary “auteur,” enacting her or (more usually) his plans in the teeth of collective indifference or positive hostility, all filmmakers, to greater or lesser extent, benefited from the support and informed criticism of others at Lenfilm. But before viewing what came out of the studio, we need to walk in through its doors.

<sup>131</sup> Production stills also have value for those seeking to reconstruct early versions of films that later underwent significant edits, since at times they include scenes that disappeared from the final films.

<sup>132</sup> Exceptions include Joshua First, “Making Soviet Melodrama Contemporary: Conveying ‘Emotional Information’ in the Era of Stagnation,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 2: 1 (2008), 21–42; L. Kaganovsky, “The Cultural Logic of Late Socialism,” *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 3: 2 (2009), 185–199, which contains an interesting discussion on desire in *Moscow Doesn’t Believe in Tears*; A. Fishzon, “The Fog of Late Socialism: Explorations of Time and Affect in the Late Soviet Animation,” *Cahiers du monde russe* 56: 2 (2015), 571–598; and the brief remarks about emotion and the natural world in Margolit, *Zhivye i mertvoe*, 401.

<sup>133</sup> I was prompted to these reflections by the reaction of film scholar Reidar Due, a specialist in Western European cinema, who remarked that Ilya Averbakh, despite his subtle eye for color and talented handling of *mise-en-scène*, was guilty of “trivial” characterization (pers. inf.). To my mind also, the routine juxtapositions of “philistine” and “sensitive” characters in Averbakh’s films (*The Monologue*, *Other People’s Letters*, *The Voice*, etc.) are the least interesting aspect of his work. I prefer to shift attention from explicit didacticism of this kind (often used as a diversionary tactic to frustrate the vetting process), but without interpreting late Soviet cinema in terms of hidden subversive messages, which would be equally intellectually limiting. Of course, at times there *were* such messages, but they do not comprise the whole content of the film. As recalled by Yury Klepikov, this was not dissimulation or encoding, but a “balancing act”: “We had to work with Soviet power, but we feared ideological contamination” (“Prervannyi polet,” 52).

# 1

## Big Hopes and Trouble, 1961–1969

Young people are our big hope, but they spell trouble for us too.<sup>1</sup>

A standard Russian New Year greeting includes the formula, “May you enjoy creative success.” So far as Georgy Nikolaev and the studio of which he was director were concerned, the opening of 1961 promised the opposite.<sup>2</sup> On Wednesday January 4, just as workplaces creaked into motion after the holidays, he reported to his colleagues in the Party Committee an extremely unpleasant meeting that had just taken place in Moscow, chaired by Ekaterina Furtseva, minister of culture for the USSR (and the only woman to enjoy high office since Alexandra Kollontai back in the 1920s).

The ministerial representatives had castigated Lenfilm’s movies as “out of touch.” They had not even mentioned recent successes such as Roman Tikhomirov’s film-opera *The Queen of Spades*, Joseph Heifitz’s adaptation of Chekhov’s *The Lady with the Dog*, and Vladimir Vengerov’s war movie *The Baltic Sky*. They had ignored both of the new films shown prerelease immediately before the meeting, the veteran director Alexander Ivanov’s epic based on Sholokhov, *Virgin Soil Upturned*, and Vladimir Fetin’s *The Tiger Trip*, about chaos on board a transport of big cats from “somewhere in the tropics” to Odessa.

The august audience had enjoyed the labyrinthine nonsense of Fetin’s plot, with Evgeny Leonov as the struggling short-order cook posing as animal trainer who has to put up with an escaped chimpanzee as well as the frisky felines. “Open laughter” had rung out. But when it came to the discussion, “Instead the focus was on our duds: *Homeward Bound* and *Other People’s Woes*.<sup>3</sup> When you make movies like that, there’s no comeback.”

Lenfilm’s chief engineer, Iosif Aleksander, had tried to defend the studio. It was impossible to reconcile the contradictory instructions received from the two separate

<sup>1</sup> Gennady Malyshev, production director of the Third Creative Unit, September 22, 1965, PA, d. 70, l. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Georgy Nikolaev (b. 1904) was a former camera operator and documentary filmmaker from a Kazan Province village who had joined the administration of LF in November 1954 as deputy director for production after working as director of Progress-Film in Berlin. In January 1957, he replaced Sergei Vasilyev, co-director of *Chapaev*, who had worked as LF’s director for only two years. See his Party file, TsGAIPD, f. 24, op. 133, d. 374, ll. 1–6. Vasilyev was an exception to the general rule of appointing arts administrators as directors; his predecessor, Ivan Glotov, who served for over a decade, had come up through the Leningrad Party hierarchy.

<sup>3</sup> *Homeward Bound* (*Domoi*, 1960) was a drama directed by Aleksandr Abramov (1915–2002, who despite his age counted as “young” because he made his first film in 1958). Its subject was a deep-sea fisherman deciding to spend his leave in his home village (see Dmitry Ivaneev et al., *Lenfilm: Annotated Catalogue, 1918–2003* [SPb., 2003], no. 545). *Other People’s Woes* (*Chuzhaya beda*, 1960), by Yan Fried (Yakov Friedland, 1908–2003), a drama about a collective farm chairman who abandons job and family for his mistress before returning home in a new mood of social commitment, is now considered a landmark of Thaw cinema.

departments of the Ministry of Culture dealing with film. But his remarks had no effect. Furtseva and her colleagues insisted that the handling of scripts in the studio was particularly poor and that here were serious signs of malfunctioning in the department responsible. Altogether, the meeting had been a disaster. What was more, Nikolaev emphasized, this was a “last warning.”<sup>4</sup>

In part, the malaise at Lenfilm was the result of the intense scrutiny from outside. The Ministry of Culture was pushing through a program of reforms to film studios nationwide, as part of a declared efficiency drive that, it was proclaimed, would heighten quality and reduce costs. In order to justify these reforms, Furtseva and her colleagues had employed the standard Soviet procedure of “self-criticism,” or a virulent attack on the status quo. A comparable assault on Mosfilm in a ministerial order of May 12, 1961, also criticized various kinds of inefficiency (lengthy gaps between work on completed and new features by experienced directors, the lack of support and guidance to young people, etc.). It too underlined the need for structural reform.<sup>5</sup> Just as typical was the way criticism from above generated all-round soul-searching and apportionment of blame within the workplace.<sup>6</sup> Fault had to be found, whether or not anyone had noticed it earlier, and scapegoats identified, whether or not their behavior had actually caused the problems.

All the same, it was not just the Ministry of Culture’s commitment to restructuring that had generated low morale. Months before the meeting, in October 1960, a report compiled by the studio’s own Party organization had also identified problems with the scripts department. “Every director in the studio is being offered *Dasha*, because it’s in the plan, even though the script’s no good.” Lenfilm’s generational profile was an embarrassment: “We’re aging, not getting younger.”<sup>7</sup> On January 4, 1961, Tamara Samoznaeva, an experienced director of production then acting as Party secretary,<sup>8</sup> flatly asserted: “We have no good scripts, we have no collective spirit, no camaraderie. We’re putting up with things out of habit. It’s time to draw the line.”<sup>9</sup>

Both the rhetoric in which these concerns were expressed and their substance (the need to foster a new, politically committed, younger generation and to boost creative energy at Lenfilm itself) echoed the Ministry of Culture’s. Yet Nikolaev held out against the key reform proposed by the ministry—the abolition of the scripts department and reorganization of the studio into three “creative units” meant to act as workshops for the training of young filmmakers, as well as reviewing scripts and films at every stage of their production.<sup>10</sup> Subordinate to the Lenfilm management, with no independent budget of their own, and reporting to the studio-wide artistic council, the units all the

<sup>4</sup> PA, d. 35, ll. 1–2.

<sup>5</sup> See the report on the collaboration with MF, SD, op. 18, d. 2, ll. 4–5.

<sup>6</sup> On sessions of *samokritika* (literally “self-criticism,” but more broadly, public criticism) in the Soviet workplace, see D. S. Likhachev, *Vospominaniya. Razdumya. Raboty raznykh let 1* (SPb., 2006), 313–324.

<sup>7</sup> PA, d. 27, l. 39, l. 35. Efforts to place *Dasha* were fruitless: the script was, in the event, never made.

<sup>8</sup> The director of production (*direktor kartiny*) was the administrator charged with running the financial and administrative side of making a movie. He or (more rarely) she combined the roles of producer, location director, manager, and so on.

<sup>9</sup> PA, d. 35, l. 4.

<sup>10</sup> See further on creative units later in this chapter. On the resistance, see the Ministry of Culture order of June 28, 1961, “On the Improvement of Work at LF”: “The management of the studio has over an extended period failed to act on the ministry’s repeated recommendations to set up creative units in the studio.” SD, op. 18, d. 3, l. 36.

same were meant to have limited autonomy in commissioning scripts and assigning them to directors. At Mosfilm, such a restructuring had begun early in 1959, and in 1960, a special unit for films aimed at a young audience was set up. The reform was complete by late August 1961, with the formation of two more specialist units—TV films and a “unit of writers and cinema workers”—and three general units.<sup>11</sup> The ministry regularly reminded Lenfilm’s administrators of Mosfilm’s example, but to no avail.

In opposing the formation of “creative units,” Nikolaev and his colleagues reflected wider opinion among leading figures at the studio. The leading director Joseph Heifitz, a figurehead of Thaw cinema since his epoch-making movie about a dynasty of shipworkers, *The Big Family* (1954), was tenaciously opposed to the “units,” arguing that they would lead to “fragmentation.”<sup>12</sup> Certainly, the proposed units threatened the power of the studio’s artistic council, whose meetings were dominated by Heifitz himself, along with Grigory Kozintsev, Friedrich Ermler, and other doyens of the Leningrad film world.

The artistic council was the main route to power for senior film directors within the Soviet film studio. The post of general director was reserved for a figure considered suitable by the Party authorities, which almost always signified an administrator.<sup>13</sup> In the circumstances, senior filmmakers were wary of restructuring that seemed to diminish their leverage. For his part, Nikolaev was aware that cooperation with authoritative film artists was essential to the legitimization of the studio management among creative personnel.

Caught between the Ministry of Culture’s model for change (unacceptable to senior figures at the studio) and these figures’ wishes to keep things much as they were (unacceptable to Furtseva and her colleagues), Nikolaev floundered. On March 15, 1961, the Party Committee passed a motion of censure, noting that he had “failed to manifest due tenacity.”<sup>14</sup> On May 3, 1961, Nikolaev was removed by the Ministry of Culture from his position as general director, and replaced by Ilya Kiselev, a studio outsider and former actor who had previously worked as a top-level administrator in two of Leningrad’s leading theaters.<sup>15</sup>

### Other People’s Woes: How the Thaw Reached Lenfilm

The appointment of a new general director underlined the authorities’ intent to transform Lenfilm. Unlike the directors of theaters, whose primary role was financial management, general directors of film studios were responsible also for overall ideological and artistic policy. Certainly, this power was not unlimited. Considerable authority

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.planetslife.ru/context.html>.

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., PA, d. 36, ll. 45–50.

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Pyryev, one of the key filmmakers of the late Stalin era, led MF for three years in 1954–1957. But this case where an acknowledged (if controversial) talent was promoted to high administrative office had few if any parallels. Much more typical were cases such as Vladimir Surin, director of MF from 1959 to 1965, who previously held posts in the Composers’ Union and performed a variety of cinema-related administrative duties in the Ministry of Culture.

<sup>14</sup> PA, d. 35, l. 57.

<sup>15</sup> For the decision, see SD, op. 18, d. 3, l. 15, l. 20. For Kiselev’s career history, see his Party dossier, TsGAIPD-SPb., f. 24, op. 166, d. 66, l. 3 ob.