

**VISUALIZING THE PAST: PERESTROIKA DOCUMENTARY MEMORY OF
STALIN-ERA TRAUMA**

by

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The main goal of this dissertation is to look at how, during perestroika, documentary breaks away from the traditional notions of the genre in order to reexamine and redefine traumatic events from the Stalinist period. The first chapter examines the nuances of three critical terms: “documentary,” “collective memory,” and “cultural trauma.” I then turn to a historical approach, exploring how political culture and technology affected the content, production, and screening of documentaries, first discussing the time leading up to perestroika and then the massive changes during the glasnost era.

In the final chapters, I argue that there are three primary approaches the films examined in this project take to understanding the past. First, films that present the Soviet Union as a system that can be saved by a return to Leninist ideals, such as in Marina Babak’s *More Light* (*Bol'she sveta*, 1988), and Marina Goldovskaia’s *Solovki Power* (*Vlast' Solovetskaia*, 1988). Second, films that delve into the lasting effects of Stalinism on contemporary Soviet society, as in Tofik Shakhverdiev’s *Stalin is With Us?* (*Stalin s nami?*, 1989), and Igor' Beliaev’s *Trial II* (*Protsess II*, 1988). Third, films that demystify the cult of Stalin and his inner circle through a more intimate study of their personal lives, like Semen Aranovich’s *I was Stalin’s Bodyguard* (*Ia sluzhil v okhrane Stalina*, 1989) and *I Worked for Stalin, or Songs of the Oligarchs* (*Ia sluzhil v apparate Stalina, ili Pesni oligarkhov*, 1990). The readings of these films draw on Maurice Halbwachs’ notion of collective memory, which asserts that there is memory outside of

individual consciousness and that this memory is both shared and constructed by a society, and on the idea of cultural trauma. As Jeffrey Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, and Piotr Sztompka argue in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, a society recovers from cultural trauma by collectively and publicly grappling with a set of questions that include what is the nature of the pain, what is the nature of the victim, what is the relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience, and who is responsible for the trauma?

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PREFACE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Documentary cinema served as a complex barometer of the cultural and political climate in the Soviet Union throughout its seventy-four years of existence. In the 1920s, filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov¹ used documentary as a way to experiment with creating a new cinematic truth and a supposedly more authentic way of viewing the world. For Vertov, the *kinoglaz* (cine-eye) was even more adept at doing this than the human eye. He wrote that “the movie camera was invented in order to penetrate deeper into the visible world, to explore and record visual phenomena, so that we do not forget what happens and what the future must take into account” (*Kino-Eye* 67). This dissertation focuses on two issues: not forgetting the past and negotiating what the future should remember.

Under Stalin, documentary shifted to a more standardized and less experimental way of broadcasting the official Soviet version of the truth.² Even Vertov’s style changed as he made the films *Three Songs about Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Lenine*, 1934) and *Lullaby* (*Kolybel'naia*, 1938), both of which contributed to the myth of the great leader instead of focusing on everyday life caught unawares, which had been Vertov’s goal in his earlier works. In *Forward Soviet!*

¹ A note on Transliteration: System II will be used throughout, except when otherwise indicated.

² While Stalin’s love of cinema is widely noted, he did not share the same feelings for documentary films and worried about appearing in them (Hicks, *Dziga Vertov* 116).

History and Non-Fiction Film in the USSR, Graham Roberts described Soviet documentary cinema, particularly in the post-war years, as cinema that “was presenting a fantasy world where all was well in the Soviet bloc, and the working class, condemned to reside in the rest of the world, craved the same Utopia” (139).

Despite the popular, and often scholarly misconception, as evidenced in Roberts’ work, that documentary cinema vanished between the era of Vertov and perestroika, the genre lived on during these decades, albeit away from the spotlight. The number of documentaries produced, particularly newsreels, remained high.³ During The Great Patriotic War, newsreel cameramen risked their lives on the front to capture footage. Every fourth cameraman was killed and every other was seriously wounded (Mikhailov and Fomin 4). Many who survived achieved fame and a cult-like status.⁴

In addition to newsreels, films by directors such as Mikhail Romm, Artavazd Peleshian, and Herz Frank stand out as interesting and innovative examples of documentary cinema of the 1960s and 1970s that go beyond pro-communist propaganda. Romm, following Esfir' Shub’s

³ During the 1970s and 1980s, there were approximately 1500 documentaries produced annually in the Soviet Union, a figure that includes films produced for television and for the big screen, as well as many films that were essentially made for the archives (Dzhulai, *Dokumental'nyi* 177).

These films were kept for archival purposes, but not released to the public.

⁴ For further discussion of this phenomenon see Benjamin Raiklin’s (University of Wisconsin – Madison) forthcoming dissertation “Towards a ‘Cult’ of the Frontline Newsreel and Cameraman: Stalinist Documentary Filmmaking Efforts and the Politics of War and War Memory, 1928-1948.”

compilation documentary model established in *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty (Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1928), crafted a picture of Nazi Germany that paralleled Soviet Russia in *Ordinary Fascism (Obyknovennyi fashizm*, 1965). Peleshian and Frank, by contrast, moved away from political documentaries. Filmed in an observational style and utilizing a technique Peleshian called “distance montage,” the filmmaker’s *The Seasons (Vremena goda*, 1975) reflects on man’s complicated relationship with nature. Frank is known both for his own films, including the short *Ten Minutes Older (Starshe na desiat' minut*, 1978), and for his role in mentoring Juris Podnieks, whose *Is it Easy to Be Young? (Legko li byt' molodym?*, 1986) changed the face of Soviet documentary in the 1980s.

During perestroika, Soviet documentary experienced a major boom when a desire for the “truth” about the Soviet past and present--both internally and abroad--led to a resurgence of the genre.⁵ Many films of this period were cinematic *publitsistika*, a form of investigative journalism that often explored the darker elements of life in the Soviet Union. While many focused on present hardships, such as Stanislav Govorukhin’s *This is No Way to Live (Tak zhit' nel'zia*, 1990), others reexamined the past in much more open terms than had previously been allowed. Marina Goldovskaia’s *Solovki Power (Vlast' Solovetskaia*, 1988), a film about the first camp in the Gulag system, was voted by readers of *Sovetskii ekran* the second most popular film

⁵ I mark the beginning of perestroika in the film industry as the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers’ Union in 1986 and see the first major documentary film of this era as Podnieks’ *Is it Easy to Be Young?*

of 1989 (Erokhin 3).⁶ A collection of Soviet documentaries toured the United States as part of the 1989 Glasnost Film Festival, which featured twenty-two films made or released in 1987 and 1988.

In the discussion of the timeline of documentary cinema, this dissertation takes a historical approach, examining how political culture and technology affected the content, production, and screening of documentary films. The readings of individual films draw on Maurice Halbwachs's notion of collective memory, which asserts that there is memory outside of individual consciousness and that this memory is both shared and constructed by a society, including its mass media. Halbwachs explains that "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (38). The collective remembrances of society are necessary for constructing the framework for individual memory. Additionally, it is important who creates these memories. Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins write that "groups can also use images of the past and struggles over history as vehicles for establishing their power or, perversely, lack of power" (127). Perestroika-era documentaries begin to feature a more diverse group of individual voices, as opposed to a homogenous narrative from the perspective of the state, reflecting a shift in power.

This dissertation examines individual films as acts of commemoration, the messages they give viewers, and how they fit within the history of commemoration of the Stalinist period.

⁶ Goldovskaia has spent time living and working in the United States, where she transliterates her name as "Goldovskaya." In this dissertation, however, I will use "Goldovskaia" to maintain a consistent transliteration system except in parenthetical citations to *Woman with a Movie Camera*, published under the name "Marina Goldovskaya."

It also looks at how these new memories help Soviet viewers come to terms with the cultural trauma of the Stalin era. While not all of these films were made with the specific intention of changing how the past is remembered, each new way of constructing the past affects how the present remembers it. The main goal of this dissertation is to look at how, during perestroika, the genre breaks away from the traditional notions of Soviet documentary in order to reexamine and redefine traumatic events from the Stalinist period.

This dissertation is divided into two sections, containing a total of six chapters within those sections. Section one, “The What and Why of Soviet Documentary,” serves as an introduction and provides the background information necessary for understanding the context of the films discussed in the dissertation. “Theoretical Questions” (Chapter 1) introduces issues related to the genre of documentary and the concepts of collective memory and cultural trauma. “The Role of Documentary in the Soviet Union” (Chapter 2) presents a brief history of documentary in the Soviet Union, in order to understand its importance and changing role in society, including how documentaries were made and screened.

Section two, “Documentary Cinema during Perestroika,” begins by examining how documentary production and exhibition changed during the mid-1980s. The section then presents several case studies of films that focus on historical subjects primarily from the Stalin era, including Marina Babak’s *...More Light! (...Bol'she sveta!*, 1988), Goldovskaia’s *Solovki Power*, Tofik Shakhverdiev’s *Stalin is with us? (Stalin s nami?*, 1989), Igor' Beliaev’s *Trial II (Protsess II*, 1988), and Semen Aranovich’s *I was Stalin’s Bodyguard (Ia sluzhil v okhrane Stalina*, 1989) and *I Worked for Stalin, or Songs of the Oligarchs (Ia sluzhil v apparate Stalina, ili Pesni oligarkhov*, 1990).

1.1 SECTION 1: THE WHAT AND WHY OF SOVIET DOCUMENTARY

1.1.1 Chapter 1: Theoretical Questions

The first chapter addresses terminology and definitions used in the project, particularly those of “documentary,” “collective memory,” and “cultural trauma.” The general underlying concept of documentary is something that presents “the truth” about its subject. This is, of course, not as straightforward as it might seem at first glance. Documentaries, like any other film, are constructed texts and cannot be free from bias. Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight write in their book about mockumentaries, *Faking It: Mock-documentary and the subversion of factuality*, that “documentaries, like fictional texts, construct narratives and employ similar codes and conventions... to construct stories about the social world” (8). They continue, “the objective [of documentaries] is to sustain a sense of realism, a sense of the world that is unproblematic... The discourse of realism is important as it enables documentary to construct ideological positions, but to obscure such positions as natural occurring under the guise of common sense” (16). The “reality” constructed in Soviet documentaries looks very different from the “reality” that was presented during perestroika and the post-Soviet era. To complicate the matter further, there is no prescribed format for documentaries and the films can take on many different forms.⁷

Collective memory is defined by Pierre Nora as “what remains of the past in the lived reality of groups, or what these groups make of the past.” (qtd Le Goff 95). In the case of the

⁷ Nichols, for example, describes the six principal modes of documentary filmmaking: poetic mode, expository mode, observational mode, participatory mode, reflexive mode and performative mode (31-32).

events depicted in the films examined in this dissertation, public discussion was about how to make sense of the past when lived experience did not always correspond to the official story of the same events. Does new collective memory need to be formed? How does that process happen and how can cinema play a role in it?

Cultural trauma refers to a negative event or situation which, according to Neil Smelser, is seen as threatening to a society's existence (qtd Eyerman 2). This can be in the form of an acute trauma, a sudden influential event, or chronic trauma, which slowly builds over time. As with collective memory, cultural trauma is shared by members of a society regardless of whether they personally experienced it or not. Cultural trauma needs to be worked through in a way that addresses the following issues: the nature of the pain, the nature of the victim, the relation of the trauma victim to a wider audience and the attribution of responsibility (Alexander et al. 13). I examine how each film discussed in the dissertation responds to this set of questions.

1.1.2 Chapter 2: The Role of the Documentary in the Soviet Union

This chapter briefly summarizes the history of the genre, focusing primarily on the role documentary played in the post-Stalin years, as that is the time period that is both most overlooked in Western scholarship and also the time period directly leading up to perestroika-era changes. This chapter is arranged chronologically to trace the developments leading up to the 1980s. While this dissertation will not attempt to provide a complete history of the documentary genre throughout the entire Soviet period, it recognizes that the changes that occur during perestroika and the post-Soviet period cannot be explained without first examining the position of the documentary in Soviet culture prior to these years.

1.2 SECTION 2: DOCUMENTARY CINEMA DURING PERESTROIKA

1.2.1 Chapter 3: The Context of Perestroika Documentary Cinema

Section two addresses the role of documentary cinema during perestroika. Chapter three lays out the political and cultural context that allowed for massive changes in what was permissible on film. During perestroika, shifts in power and policy occurred in all areas of the film industry. In the Union of Filmmakers, Elem Klimov ousted Brezhnev-era Lev Kulidzhanov as the First Secretary of the Union. The Union of Filmmakers' changes focus around both freedom of expression and the restructuring of the faltering and technologically backward industry (Stites 184). One of the first projects of the Union's new leadership became the establishment of the Conflict Commission led by film critic Andrei Plakhov. The Commission had to review and release the films banned for ideological reasons during the Soviet period. In Goskino, Alexander Kamshalov replaced Brezhnev-era veteran Filipp Ermash, whose name was associated with the stagnation of the industry (Lawton 55). This reshuffling coincided with an increase in filmmakers' decision-making powers as studios acquired the rights to plan their own productions, decide on scripts, and move toward self-financing (Lawton 55). This led the film industry to create the "new economic model of cinema," which focused on independent studios, joint ventures, and cooperative productions (Stites 187). The system of self-financing, called *khozraschet*, helped with this process (Lawton 76).

The policies of glasnost allowed for the exploration of formerly taboo topics in cultural artifacts. In cinema this began with documentary cinema, particularly *Is it Easy to be Young?*, which gave a voice to the youth movement and disclosed the existence of multiple subcultures within the Soviet Union. Documentaries explored worlds into which cinema had never before

ventured: the mind of a convicted killer, youth counter cultures, Chernobyl, alcoholism, and other topics. The other place to which documentary filmmakers turned was their country's past.

Anna Lawton explains in her book *Kinoglasnost*:

By looking back at the past, the documentarists try to explain the present. The common question, central to most films is: what was the cause of the present collapse of our economy, the loss of spiritual values, the lack of moral principles and civic pride, and what are the prospects for our youth in a society that has lost a clear direction. (141)

This dissertation focuses on perestroika documentaries that explored the Stalinist past. These films, while giving a personal voice to individuals, tended to present big, overarching issues that had the potential to affect the entire country and dealt explicitly with Stalin and the effects of Stalinism but presented them in a way that maintained a belief in the Soviet system as a whole. Many of these films use people's autobiographical memory to contribute to the new story of the Soviet past.⁸

⁸ Halbwachs distinguishes between "autobiographical memory" and "historical memory." Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy explain the difference by saying that autobiographical memory "concerns the events of one's own life that one remembers because they were experienced directly" while historical memory "refers to the residues of events by virtue of which groups claim a continuous identity through time" (19).

1.2.2 Chapter 4: The System Can be Saved

Although documentaries of the perestroika-era criticized the regime, they frequently did so in a way that expressed a belief in the fact that the system could be saved. Despite the crimes of the past, particularly those committed by Stalin, communism and the Soviet Union were still worth fighting for. Two films in which this is especially evident are Babak's ...*More Light!* and Goldovskaia's *Solovki Power*. Despite their at times controversial subject matter, these films rely on conventional Soviet narrative techniques to present their arguments. ...*More Light!* recounts the history of the Soviet Union in 10-year increments, marking the anniversaries of the October Revolution, including both its triumphs and major failures. It uses previously shot footage, some of it newly released from the archives, to discuss everything from the Great Terror to Chernobyl. The well-known voice of Mikhail Ul'ianov guides the viewer to a proper understanding and interpretation of the images. The film concludes, however, on an optimistic note, with the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution and a call for "bol'she demokratii, bol'she sveta!"

Solovki Power operates on similar principles. The film also uses archival footage, in this case a film about the camp on the Solovki Islands, in conjunction with interviews with survivors of the camp. Goldovskaia uses an authoritative male narrator, the voice of Aleksandr Proshkin, director of another perestroika-era sensation *The Cold Summer of 1953 (Kholodnoe leto piatdesiat tret'ego, 1987)*, to explain the images to the audience. The film condemns the camp system and the associated atrocities committed under both Lenin's and Stalin's regimes, but, as in ...*More Light!*, suggests that the system is not entirely corrupt through its repeated references

to the persecution of good communists who remain faithful to the regime's founding principles and original ideology.⁹

1.2.3 Chapter 5: Stalin's Continued Role in the 1980s

Several perestroika-era films explore the role Stalin and his legacy continue to play in the contemporary Soviet Union. Beliaev's *Trial II* looks back at Stalinism through many different lenses, including the eyes of those involved in the October Revolution and the perspectives of those repressed by Stalin, such as Nikolai Bukharin and his wife, Anna Larina, who discusses her time in the camps and exile during her interview. Beliaev juxtaposes archival footage with contemporary images. What makes this film different from something like *Solovki Power* is that Beliaev includes contemporary interviews discussing the state of the Soviet Union at the time and the disillusionment felt by its citizens. Shakhverdiev's *Stalin is with us?* presents an image of the continued role Stalin plays in the hearts and minds of the Soviet people. Interviewees express their love for Stalin--both for the leader personally and for the order that was in place under his rule--and discuss the supposedly exaggerated claims of Stalinist repression. The film's framing device, a hypnotist performing a show during which guests on-stage make blatantly false statements, leaves no doubt in the viewer's mind concerning how to feel about present-day Stalinists.

⁹ Although Goldovskaia includes the date of Solovki's founding, 1923, she does not explicitly mention the fact that this occurred under Lenin's rule.

1.2.4 Chapter 6: Demystifying Stalin and His Circle

Blaming Stalin for his role in the problems of the Soviet Union was nothing new by perestroika. Stalin had already been denounced by Nikita Khrushchev in his secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 and removed from his place alongside Lenin in the mausoleum on Red Square. What glasnost-era documentaries brought to the image of Stalin was a much more personal, intimate, eye-witness look at Stalin's personal and professional life, as well as the workings of his innermost circle. Aranovich's films *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* and *I Worked for Stalin* both offer a look behind the closed doors of the Kremlin. In *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* the last surviving bodyguard of Stalin, Aleksei Rybin, reminisces about all aspects of Stalin's life, including his death. Aranovich combines footage of Rybin's interviews with never-before-aired footage of Stalin. *I Worked for Stalin* delves even deeper into the power structure and offers many different voices to explore the system. The film uses archival footage, as well as eyewitness accounts and interviews, to explore the relationships among Stalin and other high-ranking officials, including Viacheslav Molotov, Lavrentii Beria, Andrei Zhdanov, Georgii Malenkov, and Nikita Khrushchev.

1.3 CONCLUSION

Soviet documentary is a genre that is largely ignored by western scholars, with only one English-language monograph on the general history of documentary, Roberts' *Forward Soviet!*. Even in this work, Roberts identifies the "not so strange death of Soviet documentary" as having occurred in the years immediately following the Great Patriotic War, devoting fewer than two

pages to the years between 1950 and 1985, where he argues that documentary begins to experience a revival, and he does not explore the post-1985 period in depth either. This leaves a void in the study of Soviet documentary cinema that is virtually unexplored outside of Russian-language scholarship.

Documentary cinema of the mid-1980s through 1991 is important for a variety of reasons. Through the lens of documentary, it is possible to trace shifts in a culture's concept of itself and its history. The Stalin who appears in Vertov's *Lullaby* is not the same Stalin as in Shakhverdiev's *Stalin is with us?*. While this can also be said of fictional films, I see a fundamental difference in what is presented as "fiction" (even allegorical fiction, such as Tengiz Abuladze's *Repentance* [*Pokaianie*, 1984/1986]) and what is presented as "fact" in terms of how it reflects society's attitudes towards the subject.

The changes that occur in the documentary cinema industry during this period are also closely connected with massive changes in how the government controls and funds cinema, and are reflected in the subject matter and production circumstances of these films. In a cultural and political context, documentary cinema matters because of the way it attempts to renegotiate how and what it depicts as "the truth," and how to understand the cultural trauma of the Stalin era, at the same time the Soviet Union grapples with the same questions.

2.0 THEORETICAL QUESTIONS

This chapter defines three critical terms used in the project: “documentary,” “collective memory,” and “cultural trauma.” As all three of these terms are either controversial or have multiple interpretations, I address how I understand each one, focusing on the nuances of usage, historical development of the terms, and how they are useful for this dissertation.

2.1 DOCUMENTARY

The concept of “documentary cinema” is central to this dissertation. While the following chapter delves more deeply into the history of Russian and Soviet documentary, this section addresses how I understand and define “documentary,” as well as different models of understanding the genre that I see as useful for analyzing documentaries.

At first glance, the idea of a documentary film is simple. The general underlying concept of documentary is something that presents “the truth” about its subject. In the forward to *The Documentary Film Book*, Nick Fraser cites the dictionary definition: “‘Documentary,’ says the dictionary, ‘Noun. Based on or recreating an actual event, era, life story, that purports to be factually accurate and contains no fictional elements’” (xii). This is, of course, not as straightforward as it might seem. Fraser continues, problematizing this definition: “Why shouldn’t non-fiction contain elements of fiction? And why should something only ‘purport’ to

be factually accurate? When you describe anything, it is altered. The act of seeing plainly modifies what is seen” (xii). Jane Roscoe and Craig Hight also address the issue of attempting to find a definition of documentary. They write in their book about mockumentaries, films that mimic documentary genre conventions with fictional content, *Faking It: Mock-documentary and the subversion of factuality*, that “documentaries, like fictional texts, construct narratives and employ similar codes and conventions... to construct stories about the social world” (8). Documentaries cannot only be a collection of pure facts as such--they are constructed, biased texts, and the term “documentary” has been contested and redefined over time.

In a sense, the documentary has been around since the advent of cinema. The concept of a documentary film emerged slowly over a period of almost thirty years, from approximately 1894-1922, according to Lewis Jacobs, who sees a fundamental shift from reality as background in early films to reality as subject of the documentary (Jacobs 2; 5). Brian Winston describes this period as the traditionally identified “pre-documentary phase,” which spanned from the first recorded images through Robert Flaherty’s 1922 *Nanook of the North* (“Introduction” 2). Early films, such as the Lumière brothers’ *Workers Emerging from a Factory (La Sortie des usines Lumière à Lyon, 1895)* were praised for their ability to portray reality better than any other previous medium. As early as 1898 the idea that film could be used as educational material emerged, as the Polish cinematograph operator Boleslaw Matuszewski argued in his *A New Source of History* (Barnouw 27). Until approximately 1900, the primary goal of films was to show movement and motion, taking materials directly from reality.

As film technology advanced and the length of films increased, techniques and subjects of films began to evolve. In 1903 the development of editing shifted the focus of filmmaking. The content of the films expanded and their purpose became to inform, as cinema was no longer

relegated to capturing reality exactly as it was and could be changed and moved around for narrative effect (Jacobs 3). With the introduction of the first regularly-produced newsreels in 1910 under Charles Pathé, factual films were made and distributed regularly and were very well received (Jacobs 5). Jacobs argues that during this period of the development of the genre, there was a growing interest in looking at the social environment. He writes that “cameras focused on the issue of war and peace, political strife among nations, problems of street life in large cities, the growing interest in the polar regions and manners and customs in strange and distant lands” (4). All of these developments culminated in what is regarded as the first feature length “factual” film, Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North*.¹⁰ Flaherty created several films in this same type, including *Moana* (1926). A review of this film is generally cited as the first use of the term “documentary” to description of this type of film (Winston, *Claiming* 11). The anonymous article “Flaherty’s Poetic *Moana*,” later attributed to fellow documentary filmmaker John Grierson, appeared in the 8 February 1926 issue of the *New York Sun* (Jacobs 25). The article described the “documentary value” of the film as a result of “being a visual account of events in the daily life of a Polynesian youth and his family” (qtd Winston, *Claiming* 11).

The term documentary has been contested time and again throughout its history¹¹, and there is no singular definitive description of the genre. I take my definition of documentary from

¹⁰ *Nanook of the North* as a factual film is sometimes regarded as problematic, as a result of the level of influence the director exerted on the content of the film. For more information on the controversial making of the film, see Rothman.

¹¹ In the article “The Fiction of Fact--and the Fact of Fiction,” which appeared in the January 1964 issue of *Show* magazine, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. calls documentary “one of the most

several theoretical sources and take into account the subject matter and the purpose of the director, more so than the outcome of the film. In my description of documentary, I draw primarily on Bill Nichols' characterization of the genre:

documentary film speaks about situations and events involving real people (social actors) who present themselves to us as themselves in stories that convey a plausible proposal about, or perspective on, the lives, situations, and events portrayed. The distinct point of view of the filmmaker shapes the story into a way of seeing the historical world directly rather than into a fictional allegory. (14)

questionable words in the vocabulary of film" (qtd Jacobs 383). The term, what it refers to, and the content of "documentary" films has been contested almost as long as it has been around. Even Grierson himself disliked the term that he himself helped coin, writing in the mid-1930s that "Documentary is a clumsy description but let it stand" (qtd Winston *Real* 16). Thorold Dickinson writes that "in the field of putting ideas on film, worship of the word 'documentary' needs to be reassessed. It is a hopeless corruption of a term that has come to be identified with 'pamphlet films' and dull narratives" (qtd Jacobs 368). Marya Mannes, by contrast, claims in "The Hot Documentary," originally published in *The Reporter* magazine on 17 November 1955, that "for years in the entertainment business, 'documentary' has been a dirty word. The observation of reality, a deterrent to the enjoyment of illusion, has been considered dull. 'Documentary' is still a dirty word: Now it has been discovered that the observation of reality can be dangerous" (qtd Jacobs 296). This notion of documentary as a "boring" genre is particularly relevant to the perestroika-era documentary revolution discussed in this dissertation.

A documentary presents a certain world view or perspective that the director argues as reality. Jacobs writes that “the documentary film came to be identifiable as a special kind of picture with a clear social purpose, dealing with real people and real events, as opposed to staged scenes of imaginary characters and fictional stories of studio-made pictures” (2). Similarly, Grierson makes the point that “the basic force behind [documentary] was social not aesthetic. It was a desire to make drama from the ordinary” (qtd Jacobs 72). While some documentaries focus on aesthetics, I view content as the driving force behind a documentary.

Other definitions of “documentary” focus on authorial intention. Eric Barnouw concludes that documentary filmmakers are interested in finding, selecting, and arranging instead of inventing (348). The genre is famously categorized by Grierson as “the creative treatment of actuality.” Winston discusses the origins and the more precise meaning of this definition of the genre. After describing the Lumière brothers’ *Workers Emerging from a Factory*, and how a dog was included among the images of actual workers to “make it more interesting,” Winston writes

Leaving aside all philosophical questions which influenced Grierson’s understanding of the problem... it was in the creases at the production and editing stages where he in effect located his famous definition of the documentary in 1933: the “creative treatment of actuality.” The “actuality” involved in Grierson’s definition can still lay claim to the real--the workers did leave the factory in 1895, etc.; but, creatively, a dog (actual, of course) was also introduced. The result is the mode of signification of the real world seen in documentary. (“Introduction”

6)

This “creative” interpretation, whether it is in the form of adding more interesting elements in the shot or piecing together the film in the editing room, always presents a certain authorial or even political position.

Documentaries have always struggled with the notion of subjectivity. Stella Bruzzi says that “documentary film is traditionally perceived to be the hybrid offspring of a perennial struggle between the forces of objectivity (represented by the ‘documents’ or facts that underpin it) and the forces of subjectivity (that is the translation of those facts into representational form)” (39). As a result of this supposed conflict, Michael Renov writes of the genre that “repression of subjectivity has been a persistent, ideologically driven fact of documentary history; yet subjectivity has never been banished from documentary ranks” (xviii). This, however, is not a negative quality of the genre and is not necessarily a problem that needs to be overcome. Renov continues “in fact, many of the milestone achievements of documentary filmmaking’s first decades were exercises in self-expression”, citing Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, 1929) as an example (xviii). As Jeremy Hicks notes in *Dziga Vertov: Defining Documentary Film*, “the sense of documentary as a combination of recording and argument is a point that has to be made repeatedly when discussing documentary, even in the present” (2). The fact that a film may have been designed to present a certain view does not inevitably diminish its “documentariness.”

Another definition of documentary hinges on the inherent flexibility of the genre. Fraser writes “No one should claim to say what a documentary is or should be. It doesn’t seem right to wish to fence in the form, excluding the force fields--dramatic fictions, news, agit prop--that surround it” (xiv). He, however, suggests a set of guidelines:

First, they should live... be provisional. You shouldn't know where they are going when you start. Second, somewhere--not in the script, perhaps, or by means of a reportorial presence, but through editing, via the lens, or in a barely paraphrasable way, through what they are--there must be some notion of the author, or at least that the film was guided by an individual hand, or an association of individually motivated hands. Third, they must represent some sort of creative collision--not with reality, because that's a foolish idea, but with the idea of how anything can or should be depicted... Last, and most important, those who watch documentaries as well as those who make them should realize that... anything goes. (xiv)

This set of guidelines helps understand how films with such different forms and topics can all be included under the umbrella of "documentary" and is essential to examining the evolution of the genre in both the Soviet and global context.

While it is easy to rattle off a list of tropes of a "documentary," there is, as Fraser reminds us, no prescribed format or set visual aesthetic for documentaries and the films can take on many different forms. Nichols, for example, describes the principal modes of documentary filmmaking: poetic, expository, observational, participatory, reflexive, and performative. These genres are not mutually exclusive; there can be overlap and directors can consciously shift among the different modes (155). Nichols defines the poetic mode as films that emphasize "visual associations, tonal or rhythmic qualities, descriptive passages and formal organization... This mode bears a close proximity to experimental, personal, and avant-garde filmmaking," and includes Alain Resnais's *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955) as an example (31). Films made in the expository mode emphasize "verbal commentary and an argumentative logic... This

is the mode that most people associate with documentary in general” (31). Observational mode “emphasizes a direct engagement with the everyday life of subjects as observed by an unobtrusive camera,” as in films such as *Primary* (Richard Leacock and Robert Drew, 1960) (31). Participatory mode “emphasizes the interaction between filmmaker and subject. Filming takes place by means of interviews or other forms of even more direct involvement from conversations to provocations. Often coupled with archival footage to examine historical issues” (31). Marina Goldovskaia’s film *Solovki Power (Vlast’ Solovetskaia, 1988)* is cited as an example of this. Reflexive mode, according to Nichols, “calls attention to the assumptions and conventions that govern documentary filmmaking” and “increase our awareness of the constructedness of the film’s representation of reality,” as in Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera* (31-32). Finally, the performative mode “emphasizes the subjective or expressive aspect of the filmmaker’s own involvement with a subject... [It] rejects notions of objectivity in favor of evocation and affect... The films in this mode all share qualities with the experimental, personal, and avant-garde, but with a strong emphasis on their emotional and social impact on an audience” (32). Nichols cites Ari Folman’s *Waltz with Bashir* (2008) is an example of this mode (32).

In addition to these modes, another useful way to classify documentary content is using Winston’s reconstruction continuum, which presents a spectrum from “non-intervention” from “total intervention” (Winston *Lies* 106). Winston includes within the documentary tradition the following actions: “Permissions, delays and repetitions, re-enactment of witnessed history, reenactment of history, re-enactment of the typical, enactment of the possible, enactment of the untypical,” while “acting witnessed history,” “acting,” and “total intervention” are excluded (106). While some documentaries, particularly compilation documentaries, do not contain any

of these elements, in the case of Soviet documentary it is particularly helpful to look at these types of interactions between author and subject.

Nichols argues that the modes he described developed largely chronologically, often in reaction to certain political or social movements.¹² For this reason, addressing different types and different purposes of documentaries is essential, as the historical context of the perestroika documentaries is critical for this dissertation. Often the style of the film, the role of the filmmaker, and the purpose of the film are all connected. Understanding the general historical trajectory of documentary allows us to identify the traditions on which the films draw. In this section I focus primarily, although not exclusively, on Eric Barnouw's categorization of the different roles that documentary filmmakers have historically played.

Early documentary, from the beginning of film through the 1920s, can be examined either from the perspective of common content or from the role the filmmaker fulfills. Jacobs

¹² Bruzzi writes that Nichols' trajectory suggests "a progression towards introspection and personalization" (2). He also notes of Nichols' modes that his descriptions are "illuminating," but that the "rigid use to which they have been put is not. The fundamental problem with his survival-of-the-fittest 'family tree' is that it imposes a false chronological development onto what is essentially a theoretical paradigm" (2). I agree with Bruzzi's criticism and do not see the trajectory as explicitly linear. I do not imply that once a new mode has emerged an older one must be rejected or abandoned or that certain modes could only be made at certain historical moments. In using Nichols' modes to describe films in this dissertation, I focus on their descriptive usefulness, and not on the implied "progression" or hierarchy where one mode is more advanced than the previous one.

divides early documentary into several broad categories: popular and research studies, distant and exotic places, sport and nature films, travel and scenic views, picturesque and unusual occupations, topical personalities, and the fight and wrestling films (4). Barnouw, by contrast, gives different “occupations” to different types of filmmakers and films. Flaherty, for example, with his examinations of exotic cultures, is referred to as an “explorer.” These films are primarily in the expository mode. Jacobs notes that, by the late 1920s, a trend of moral fervor and political ideology emerges, as in Viktor Turin’s *Turksib* (1929), an enthusiastic film about the construction of the Turkestan-Siberian railroad (Jacobs 13). Barnouw uses the term “reporter” to define the early Soviet documentary filmmakers, including Dziga Vertov, who proclaimed the great victories of the Soviet Union. In the late 1920s, early versions of documentaries made in the poetic mode emerge and Barnouw refers to these directors as “painters.” Films in this category include Walther Ruttmann’s *Berlin: Symphony of the City* (*Berlin: Die Sinfonie der Großstadt*, 1927) and Jean Vigo’s *On the Subject of Nice* (*À propos de Nice*, 1930).¹³

By the 1930s, however, films that fit the description of the expository mode remained the dominant documentary form and the standard model was already becoming a cliché. These films were shot in the same style used in silent-era documentaries, but included an added voiceover narration. The voice was authoritative and backed by impressive music (Barnouw 131). Audiences, similarly, were already becoming critical of the development of documentary. Evelyn Gerstein, 1936, in *New Theater Magazine*, for example, writes of three kinds of

¹³ These films also fit into a popular sub-genre of the mid-1920s-early 1930s: the urban symphony film.

documentary film “the simple statement of fact, impartial, external; the films with editorial bias, implied or stated; and the films, very few, that attain conviction beyond their partisanship” (qtd Jacobs 112).¹⁴

World War II brought significant changes to the use of the genre and documentary was significant in events leading up to the war, the war effort itself, and in helping the world deal with the aftermath of the war. Barnouw classifies both the British Grierson, and his films such as *Drifters* (1929), and the now infamous Leni Riefenstahl as “advocates.” Many of these films continued to be made in the expository mode. Riefenstahl is best known for her documentaries that glorify Hitler and the Nazi party, including *Triumph of the Will* (*Triumph des Willens*, 1935), which portrays a massive Nazi rally in Nuremburg, and *Olympia* (1938), a story of the Berlin Olympics in 1936. Once the war had begun, films that fell under the category of “bugler” were instrumental in calling people to arms for a cause on both sides. These films range from Fritz Hippler’s 1940 anti-Semitic film *The Eternal Jew* (*Der ewige Jude*) to Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* series. Following the war, Barnouw argues, the documentary filmmaker turned prosecutor, with films such as the Alexander Ford’s film *Majdanek: The Cemetery of Europe* (*Majdanek: cmentarzysko Europy*, 1944), about the Nazi concentration camp of the same name, Roman Karmen’s *Judgment of the Nations* (*Sud narodov*, 1946) about the Nuremberg trials, and Alain Resnais’ *Night and Fog*, an almost poetic visit to the site of the Auschwitz camp.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gerstein uses the films of Dziga Vertov as an example of the third category.

¹⁵ In recent years, research has revealed that these types of “prosecutor” documentaries began to appear even during the war, particularly in Soviet cinema. For further information see Jeremy Hicks’ *First Films of the Holocaust*.

As the years passed, a few previous subgenres of documentary began to make an appearance again. Poetic films reemerged as a form of post-World-War-II contemplation of life around the filmmakers, such as in Bert Haanstra's *Glass (Glas, 1958)*. Barnouw describes the role of the filmmaker as "chronicler" in his discussion of the renewed popularity of the compilation film following World War II. The subject matter of these films originally centered around the war, but then moved to other topics, such as in Il'ia Kopolin's *Unforgettable Years (Nezabyvaemye gody, 1957)*, made for the fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution and Mikhail Romm's *Ordinary Fascism (Obyknovennyi fashizm, 1965)*, an exploration of Nazi-era fascism, which drew criticism at home in the Soviet Union for the links it made to domestic politics. Industrial sponsors had been intermittent through documentary's history, but following World War II, their role greatly expanded as filmmakers played the role of "promoter." Flaherty's 1948 *Louisiana Story*, for example, was sponsored by Standard Oil of New Jersey, and Shell was another prominent sponsor of films, including some science films (Barnouw 213). It is also around this time that newsreels face a sharp decline: *March of Time* ends in 1951, and *Pathé News* in 1956 (Barnouw 206).

Beginning in the 1970s, there were three major new directions that documentaries tended to take. The first was a resurgence of films made in the style of a specific subgenre of the historical documentary: the compilation film, which Barnouw credits the Soviet filmmaker Esfir' Shub for popularizing (317). This type of film, made in the expository mode, grew rapidly in popularity in the 1970s and 1980s in part because of the need for more films to fill television and cable programming (Barnouw 317). Barnouw says that one of the benefits of the resurgence of these types of films is that they tended to involve lost causes, brought back the forgotten, and gave voice to the silent (321).

While many filmmakers of the 1970s and later focused on research, many others returned to the idea of just wanting to capture movement and sound on film, experimenting with the poetic mode. This happened most often in short films, such as in Herz Frank's *Ten Minutes Older*, a film that captures the facial expressions of children watching a puppet show for ten minutes, and *Song of Songs (Pesn' pesnei, 1989)*, about a woman giving birth (Barnouw 330).

The third major direction that documentaries took in this time period was the advent of direct cinema / *cinéma vérité*, a subgenre that exploded with the rise of video. Direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* have their roots even before the invention of the video camera, with the earlier creation of a different type of film camera: the 16mm camera, which was introduced in the 1950s, and the invention of portable equipment that allowed for the recording of synchronized sound. Prior to this invention, documentaries tended to combine footage with a soundtrack that was added in post-production (Barnouw 234). Direct cinema comes out of London in the 1950s. There was a wave of documentaries with many different subjects, but one thing in common: they acted as what Barnouw refers to as observers instead of promoters, giving viewers insight into situations they would not otherwise be privy to, and often with ambiguous feelings towards the subject of the film. Around the same time, Barnouw describes the rise of the filmmaker as catalyst, beginning with Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, filmmakers who actively were involved in their films as on camera participants (Barnouw 254). They called their technique “*cinéma vérité*,” a term that comes from Vertov's concept of *kino-pravda* (film-truth).¹⁶ Filmmakers Richard Leacock and Robert Drew helped move synchronous sound recording forward,

¹⁶ Filmmaker Jean Rouch is quoted as saying “I'm one of the people responsible for the phrase [*cinéma vérité*] and it's really in homage to Dziga Vertov” (qtd Winston, *Claiming* 171).

experimenting a lot with technology, such as in *Primary*, about John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey campaigning in Wisconsin for the democratic presidential nomination in 1960, seen as a turning point in terms of the social values of these technological experiments (Barnouw 236).

Eric Barnouw notes that “in most periods of documentary history, production has been controlled by groups in power” (287). The invention of videotape technology significantly complicated the genre of documentary. It changed who was “allowed” to make documentary, who could present “the truth,” what was “official” and, moreover, generally shifted who had power. This change in the power structure is especially important in the case of the late Soviet films I will discuss in later chapters. As videotape became an alternative to film, many aspects of documentary production changed: the cost of making films fell, tape could be reused, instant playback was available, much less technical knowledge was required, cameras became more portable and easier to maneuver, more individuals and groups could experiment with video, and filmmakers could bypass much of the bureaucracy of working with the network/station/cable systems, although they still had to navigate distribution of their films (Barnouw 287; 340). Films shot on video had a significant impact on the genre and on the world outside of filmmaking. There are examples of government policies that were changed through documentaries made on video. One such instance is when in 1988 biologist Sam Labudde made an untitled film showing net fishing of tuna and the extent of damage to dolphins caused by this method. The film was shown to an audience of United States Congressmen, who then adopted new regulations for tuna fishing as a direct result (Barnouw 347).

Although both direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* evolved from the development of synchronous sound and maneuverable cameras, and the terms are often used interchangeably, I

draw important distinctions between these two models, both of which feature in this dissertation. In differentiating between these two, I draw on Barnouw's explanation of direct cinema compared to cinéma vérité:

1. Direct cinema takes a camera to tension and waits for a crisis; cinéma vérité precipitates the crisis.
2. Direct cinema's director is invisible; cinéma vérité's is very visible.
3. In direct cinema, the filmmaker is an uninvolved bystander; in cinéma vérité the filmmaker is a provocateur.
4. In direct cinema, there is truth in the events available to the camera, in cinéma vérité, there is a paradox: artificial circumstances can bring about hidden truth (254-255).

Jacobs expands on this last notion, that the "truth was to be achieved by a direct encounter with uncontrolled life where the camera--in a figurative sense--set out to discover the genuineness of a particular human scene" (375). Another way to conceptualize the difference between these two is related to Nichols' modes: direct cinema is observational, cinéma vérité is participatory.¹⁷

¹⁷ Winston uses a geographical approach to differentiate the two. He writes "The French cinéma vérité practitioners (as I am calling them in contradistinction to their North American direct cinema colleagues) took on the objectivity problem directly and tried to solve it by putting themselves into their films" (*Real* 166). The definition leads to even more blurring of lines between the two, something which Winston himself notes, as sometimes "the Americans beyond just being merely present, provoked on-camera reaction on occasion, while the French often simply observed without overt intervention" ("Introduction" 17).

Winston sees direct cinema as a descendant of Grierson's filmmaking style, while cinéma vérité came out of Vertov's approach to documentary ("Introduction" 18).

These two genres greatly affected the development of documentary. Cinéma vérité gave rise to the interview as something useful, something that had previously been shunned. But this then led to documentaries being seen as too full of interviews. The focus on interviews, and, therefore, on sound, also led to an even greater rise in national cinema, as it became more difficult to translate films for international audiences (Barnouw 262). Direct cinema began to be combined with other things, such as subtitles or other narration as in Barbara Kopple's *Harlan County, USA* (1976) or with personal narration or first person commentary, becoming a kind of film essay (Barnouw 335-336). Cinéma vérité inspired filmmakers such as Michael Moore and his *Roger and Me* (1989) (Barnouw 338).¹⁸ The styles of direct cinema and cinéma vérité are among the most easily identifiable markers of documentary today and changes in technology, particularly in digital filmmaking, continue rapidly to affect the state of the genre with previously unfathomable speed.

2.2 COLLECTIVE MEMORY

In assessing the roles films play in society, this dissertation draws on the notion of collective memory. This section briefly addresses the development of the concept of collective memory in

¹⁸ Winston sees *Roger and Me* as an example of direct cinema, although an anomalous one ("Introduction" 19). He argues, however, that it was successful precisely because it ran contradictory to expected norms of the genre (22).

order to show the different ways it can be used. Then I will present how I understand the term, and why it is important in the context of my work.¹⁹ I take my basic definition from Ron Eyerman's introduction to *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity*. He understands the term as "recollections of a shared past 'that are retained by members of a group, large or small, that experienced it' (Schuman and Scott 1989:361–62), and passed on either in an ongoing process of what might be called public commemoration... or through discourses more specific to a particular group or collective" (5-6).

The term "collective memory" is usually attributed to Maurice Halbwachs, who was the first to write explicitly about it.²⁰ Halbwachs was influenced by his mentor, Emile Durkheim,

¹⁹ For a more complete study of the development of the concept of collective memory see, Olick and Robbins.

²⁰ As the popularity of the notion of collective memory increases, so does debate over the term. Today it is both widely and vaguely used. Post-2000 criticism of collective memory studies tend to attack the discipline's supposed "trendiness" and lack of useful application. The debate over collective memory is not entirely new, however. Since Halbwachs coined the term, there have been questions about whether it is needed when there are already concepts such as myth, tradition, and individual memory that might be used to account for many of the concepts central to collective memory. Olick and Robbins explain some other suggested terms, writing that: "some authors prefer other terms to 'collective memory'" (111). They give examples of what others propose to replace the term "collective memory:" "Sturkin (1997) defines 'cultural memory' as 'memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning.' Fentress & Wickham

who wrote extensively about commemorative rituals in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912). Olick and Robbins explain Durkheim's influence on how Halbwachs conceived of memory: "for Halbwachs, Durkheim's student, this meant that studying memory was not a matter of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind; memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated but are structured by social arrangements" (109). In addition to Durkheim, the link between memory and culture was explored by many before Halbwachs, including Sigmund Freud, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Georg Hegel. Halbwachs was inspired by their work, as well as the work of Henri Bergson, and historians Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, among others.

Halbwachs published his *The Social Frameworks of Memory*, translated into English as *On Collective Memory*, in 1925. While Halbwachs initially wrote on the subject of collective memory in the 1920s-1940s, there was a lull in the field immediately following his work. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s that collective memory took off as an area of study. Olick and Robbins explain that

[Barry] Schwartz (1996) identifies three related aspects of 1960s-1970s intellectual culture that gave rise to interest in the social construction of the past. First, multiculturalists identify historiography as a source of cultural domination and challenge dominant historical narratives in the name of repressed groups.

(1992) refer to 'social memory' rather than to collective memory. Olick & Levy (1997) refer to 'images of the past' as parts of 'political cultural profiles'" (111). I use the term "collective memory" because of its historical significance and recognizability.

Second, postmodernists attack the conceptual underpinnings of linear historicity, truth, and identity, thereby raising interest in the relations linking history, memory, and power. Finally, hegemony theorists provide a class-based account of the politics of memory, highlighting memory contestation, popular memory, and the instrumentalization of the past. (108)

This explosion of work on collective memory is also attributable to the fact that, after the post-war narrative began to fade out of public discourse, nation-states, particularly ones that had been strongly affected by World War II, began to turn to their pasts as way to legitimize themselves and to fill a need for a unified collective for identity formation.

Within academia, study of collective memory developed in several different disciplines and countries concurrently. Three particularly prominent leaders in the field have been French historian Pierre Nora, German Egyptologists Jan and Aleida Assmann, and British Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm. Nora is perhaps the most influential of the group. He claims that we now spend so much time thinking about the past because there is little left and we are disconnected from even that. The Assmanns, who work primarily with ancient history, are known for their discussion of cultural memory, which has become prominent in European cultural studies. They emphasize the fact that memory is not timeless, but rather it is a temporal process. They are not only interested in the present and how the present recreates the past, but also in memory in a historical sense and how past sources of memory are important for societies. Hobsbawm's major contribution to the field of collective memory is the distinction between worlds of custom and worlds of what he calls "invented tradition." He argues that not only have societies used collective memory and mythology of the past to establish their legitimacy, but many have even invented tradition, a term he opposes to custom, in order to achieve this.

The so called “memory boom” has led to the frequent use of this term not only in academia, but also in more mainstream culture and mass media. Today, the term collective memory is used in a variety of different disciplines, including history, psychology, literary and cultural studies, religious studies, media studies, sociology, and other fields. The idea of collective memory has inspired work in Jewish studies, particularly in connection to post-Holocaust memory, such as in James Young’s studies of Holocaust commemoration.²¹ The connection between trauma and collective memory has led to the notion of collective trauma, sometimes referred to as cultural or national trauma, which will be discussed in the following section. This, again, is taking a term that is thought of as an individual cognitive--or physical, in the case of trauma--function and realizing the role of society in shaping the individual experience. This is especially true in the case of post-Holocaust Jewish identity and much of the research using collective memory is done in this context.

As Barbie Zelizer points out, “memory is not an unchanging vessel for carrying the past into the present; memory is a process, not a thing, and it works differently at different points in time” (Olick and Robbins 122). In my definition of collective memory, I draw on Nora’s definition of the term as “what remains of the past in the lived reality of groups, or what these groups make of the past” (qtd Le Goff 95). I understand the concept of collective memory as the assertion that there is “memory” outside of individual consciousness. Collective memory is seen as located in social institutions. This idea, central to collective memory, refers to the concept that individual memories are shaped by socio-cultural contexts or frameworks. This memory is

²¹ Young, however, uses what he called “collected memory,” which emphasizes the fragmented nature of memory.

both shared and constructed by a society, including, but not limited to, individuals, mass media, civil society, and other groups. Even for societies that are not as collective-driven, the collective remembrances of a group are necessary for constructing the framework of individual memory and it is within society that people acquire their memories, as well as recall and recognize these memories.

In his introduction to *On Collective Memory* Lewis A. Coser explains that Halbwachs shows that collective memory “is not a given, but rather a socially constructed notion. Nor is it some mystical group mind... While the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember” (22). He continues that it, therefore, “follows that there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in society. Social classes, families, associations, corporations, armies and trade unions all have distinctive memories that their members have constructed, often over long periods of time” (22). The creation of collective memory, while it simultaneously takes place within the minds of individual members of the collective, is created through other, social means, such as acts of commemoration. This means that not only is it possible to remember in a group context, but that it is impossible to remember in any sort of coherent way without this context. Groups can even help individuals create memory of events at which they were not physically present. Although people are generally considered isolated beings, Halbwachs contends that “it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize and localize their memories” (38). As this relates to my dissertation, in the case of the Soviet Union, although every citizen had his own experiences, he was unable to discuss them openly in society, which affected how they were remembered.

Halbwachs differentiates between autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory, distinctions I feel are important to reiterate for the purpose of this dissertation and for explaining why I specifically refer to collective memory. Olick and Robbins offer the following concise definition: “autobiographical memory is memory of those events that we ourselves experience, while historical memory is memory that reaches us only through historical records. History is the remembered past to which we no longer have an ‘organic’ relation--the past that is no longer an important part of our lives--while collective memory is the active past that forms our identities” (111). In other words, collective memory continues to influence society and individuals. Yosef Yerushalmi further elaborates on this difference in the Jewish context, explaining that collective memory is selective and “certain memories live on; the rest are winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection,” whereas he claims that history has a “sterile posture of distance from meaning and relevance” (qtd Olick and Robbins 110). Collective memory is adapted and changed to remain relevant. The terms, however, are interconnected. Historical memory can become a part of the collective memory. As Coser explains, historical memory

reaches the social actor only through written records and other types of records, such as photography. But it can be kept alive through commemorations, festive enactment, and the like. Each celebration of, say, July 4, serves to reinforce the memory of the events that led to American independence. If individual participants in such festivities and memorial celebration had not been able to use such records, it is likely that they would be led to relax the social bonds that link them to their fellows.

Periodic celebrations serve as focal points in the drama of reenacted citizen participation. (23-24) ²²

I see the release and screening of films as an example of an act of commemoration. Olick and Robbins explain that “memory frequently employs history in its service: Professional historians have often provided political legitimation for nationalism and other more reconstructive identity struggles” (110). Without history, collective memory has little to draw from for identity formation.

In this dissertation I take from Halbwachs and others who write on collective memory not necessarily the ideas about how individuals creates their memory, but rather how society affects memory, why commemoration and public recognition of the past matter, and how collective memory affects society as a whole. This dissertation draws on the ideas of collective memory and examines individual films--acts of commemoration--, the messages they give viewers, how they fit within the history of commemoration of the Stalinist period, and, in turn, how that fits

²² Similarly, something that was once a part of the active collective memory can fade away to historical memory. As Olick and Robbins explain “Memory inevitably gives way to history as we lose touch with our pasts” (111). They continue, also explaining the relationship between historical memory and collective memory, that “historical memory, however, can be either organic or dead: We can celebrate even what we did not directly experience, keeping the given past alive for us, or it can be alive only in historical records, so-called graveyards of knowledge. Though collective memory does seem to take on a life of its own, Halbwachs reminds that it is only individuals who remember, even if they do much of this remembering together” (111).

with and what it reveals about the time period in which they were made. I emphasize Halbwachs' idea that in collective memory "the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present" (Coser 25). Halbwachs reminds us that "we shall better understand the nature of this reshaping operation as it applies to the past... if we do not forget that even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu" (49). The time of remembering directly influences what is remembered. This idea can be taken even further; Schwartz explains "collective memory does not merely reflect past experiences (accurately or not); it has an orientational function... collective memory is both a mirror and a lamp--a model of and a model for society" (qtd Olick and Robbins 124).

While not all of these films were made with the specific intention of changing how the past is remembered, each new way of constructing the past affects how the present remembers it. As Eyerman explains, "how an event is remembered is intimately entwined with how it is represented. Here the means and media of representation are crucial, for they bridge the gap between individuals and between occurrence and its recollection" (12). In the case of the events depicted in the films examined in this dissertation, the public discussion was about how to make sense of the past when lived experience did not always correspond to the official story of the same events. Does new collective memory need to be formed? How does that process happen and how can cinema play a role in it?

Among the major questions related to my use of collective memory in my reading of perestroika documentaries is: What is the purpose of commemoration, collective memory, and creating new narratives about the past? Different groups remember for different reasons. As Jan Assmann and John Czaplica explain, "the basic attitude toward history, the past, and thus the

function of remembering itself introduces another variable. One group remembers the past in fear of deviating from its model, the next for fear of repeating the past: ‘Those who cannot remember their past are condemned to relive it’ (133). But it is, of course, not just as simple as whether or not to repeat what has happened. In her book *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition*, Yael Zerubavel explains that

each act of commemoration reproduces a *commemorative narrative*, a story about a particular past that accounts for this ritualized remembrance and provides a moral message for the group members. In creating this narrative, collective memory clearly draws upon historical sources. Yet it does so selectively and creatively... The study of collective memory of a particular event thus calls for an examination of the history of its commemoration as well as its relation to other significant events in the group’s past. (6)

It is this relation of the group to its past and how that group changes the canonical version of the past that is important for my work.

The creation of new collective memory represents a major shift in power. Olick and Robbins write that “groups can also use images of the past and struggles over history as vehicles for establishing their power or, perversely, lack of power” (127). In his essay “Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory” Pierre Nora discusses this idea in depth. He writes that, unlike history “which has always been in the hands of public authorities... memory has acquired all the privileges and prestige of a popular protest movement. It has come to resemble the revenge of the underdog or injured party, the outcast, the history of those denied the right to History” (qtd

Olick et al. 440).²³ He continues “in a world in which you had *collective history* and *individual memories*, the historian exercised exclusive control, so to speak, over the past.... Today, the historian is far from alone in manufacturing the past; it is a role he shared with the judge, the witness, the media and the legislator” (qtd Olick et al. 441; emphasis in the original). This idea of collective memory being controlled by someone other than “officials” is critical for this dissertation. It is also related to the shifting of power in documentary that occurred with the advent of direct cinema and *cinéma vérité*. Nora also specifically addresses the role of criticism of official versions of history, which was the case in the Soviet Union during perestroika. This is a trend he sees as beginning around 1980 globally and writes of the appearance of

criticism of official versions of history and recovery of areas of history previously repressed; demands for signs of a past that had been confiscated or suppressed; growing interest in “roots” and genealogical research; all kinds of commemorative events and new museums; renewed sensitivity to the holding and opening of archives for public consultation; and growing attachment to what in the English-speaking world is called ‘heritage.’ (qtd Olick et al. 437)

This newly emerging criticism leads to what he refers to as the “democratization” of history. This takes the form of an emancipatory trend in peoples, ethnic groups, and classes of individuals, and features an emergence of forms of memory bound up with minority groups “for whom rehabilitating their past is part and parcel of reaffirming their identity” (qtd Olick et al. 439).

²³ Capitalization in the original.

2.3 CULTURAL TRAUMA

In my use of the term “trauma” I mean trauma as a collective experience, sometimes called “national trauma” or “cultural trauma,” a concept loosely related to collective memory. At the very basic level, Neil Smelser defines cultural trauma as “a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative affect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society’s existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions” (qtd Eyerman 2). Arthur G. Neal further explains the importance of “national trauma” in his book *National Trauma and Collective Memory*. He argues that “all collective traumas have some bearing on national identity” (29) and that “the cumulative effects of national traumas are of central importance in forging the collective identity of any given group of people” (21).

Just as collective memory differs from a person’s individual memory, national trauma differs from personal trauma. Eyerman explains that “there is a difference between trauma as it affects individuals and as a cultural process. As cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory” (1). National trauma is shared collectively and “frequently has a cohesive effect as individuals gather in small and intimate groups to reflect on the tragedy and its consequences. Personal feelings of sadness, fear and anger are confirmed when others express similar emotions” (Neal 4). While “the cultural construction of collective memory is fuelled by individual experiences of pain and suffering... it is the threat to the collective rather than individual identity that defines the suffering at stake” (Alexander 2). This type of trauma requires collective experience and Jeffrey Alexander, et al. explain in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, that “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel that they

have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (1). But, as Eyerman clarifies, “the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all. While it may be necessary to establish some event as the significant ‘cause,’ its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process which requires time, as well as mediation and representation” (2).

Neal elaborates on two types of national trauma. An acute crisis is an unscheduled sudden event. The September 11 attacks have become a quintessential example of that. The topic of this dissertation, the trauma of Stalinism, however, belongs to the second type: chronic trauma, which is enduring and long-lasting. Neal explains that chronic trauma

lacks the dramatic beginning of an acute crisis, but builds in intensity with the passing of time. This is the type of crisis that grows out of persisting contradictions within a social system. Conditions become deplorable, and problems emerge that require the attention of the nation. Rather than a volcano-like intrusion into an otherwise orderly system, a chronic crisis grows out of enduring conflicts within a social system and the emergence of a crisis of authority. (8)

Cultural trauma seriously damages society and often leaves lasting marks. In collective trauma, “conditions of trauma grow out of an injury, wound, or an assault on social life as it is known and understood. Something terrible, deplorable or abnormal has happened, and social life has lost its predictability” (Neal 4). Not all difficulties societies face become collective traumas, however. Rather, as Neal explains, “an event becomes a collective trauma when it appears to threaten or seriously invalidate our usual assessments of social reality. Under such conditions,

doubts emerge about the future as an extension of the present and social events are perceived as discontinuous. Forces are operating that can be neither clearly understood nor controlled” (Neal 7).

The effects of the trauma need to be worked through. Neal describes a national trauma as something that “involves sufficient damage to the social system that discourse throughout the nation is directed toward the disruption and the repair work that needs to be done... The degree to which a nation dwells upon a trauma depends on the degree of closure that is achieved” (5-6). In the case of Stalinism, while there was some attempt during the Khrushchev era to come to terms with the terrors of Stalin’s reign, full and open discourse does not begin until the advent of glasnost. Closure was not reached until at least then, if it has been reached at all. This process does not usually begin spontaneously, nor does it happen simply in the minds of the individuals that experienced the trauma. Jeffrey Alexander writes in *Trauma: A Social Theory* that “material forces are deeply implicated in social suffering, and the strategic calculations and practice considerations surrounding traumatic events have significant effects on social organization” (2). In his use of cultural trauma, and in mine, the concern is with tracing

the manner in which these causes and effects are crucially mediated by symbolic representations of social suffering, with understanding how a cultural process channels powerful human emotions, and to what effect. These symbolic-cum-emotional forces are carried by social groups whose actions transform the worlds of morality, materiality, and organization. Intellectuals, artists, politicians and social movement leaders create narratives about social suffering. Projected as ideologies that create new ideal interests, trauma narratives can trigger significant repairs in the civil fabric. (2)

Media plays an important role in defining and understanding cultural trauma. Eyerman writes that cultural trauma is

rooted in an event or series of events, but not necessarily in their direct experience. Such experience is usually mediated, through newspapers, radio, or television, for example, which involves a spatial as well as temporal distance between the event and its experience. Massmediated experience always involves selective construction and representation, since what is seen is the result of the actions and decisions of professionals as to what is significant and how it should be presented. (3)

The presentation, both at the time and in the years and generations following the trauma, continues to be important. As cultural trauma does not need to be experienced directly and the effects and memory of the trauma can be passed down, the traumatic event, “must be recollected by later generations who have had no experience of the ‘original’ event, yet continue to be identified by it and to identify themselves through it. Because of its distance from the event and because its social circumstances have altered with time, each succeeding generation reinterprets and represents the collective memory around that event according to its needs and means” (Eyerman 15). This helps explain the changing way that the Stalin era is presented throughout history. Eyerman argues that intellectuals play a very important role in how cultural trauma is mediated.²⁴ He claims that they “are mediators and translators between spheres of activity and

²⁴ He defines intellectuals as “Intellectual here will refer to a socially constructed, historically conditioned role rather than to a structurally determined position or a personality type. Although bound up with particular individuals, the notion will refer more to what they do than to who they

differently situated social groups, including the situatedness in time and space. Intellectuals in this sense can be film directors and singers of songs, as well as college professors” (4). In this dissertation, I look to the film directors as mediators of trauma.

The films I examine in my dissertation deal with the trauma in a way that, as Alexander et al. explain, creates a new master narrative or, as I argue, a new version of collective memory. This is one of the major reasons that it is important for societies to focus on crafting new memory, and not just writing history. The creation of a new memory is important because, although “there may be several or many possible responses or paths to resolving cultural trauma that emerge in a specific historical context... all of them in some way or other involve identity and memory” (Eyerman 4). By Alexander et al’s definition, there are four things that the new master narrative must address:

1. The nature of the pain: What actually happened both to a specific group and the wider collective?
2. The nature of the victim: What groups were affected? Were they particular groups or “the people” in general.
3. Relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience: To what extent do the audience members relate to those who experienced the trauma?
4. Attribution of responsibility: Who actually injured the victim? Who caused the trauma? (13)

are. Generally speaking, intellectuals mediate between the cultural and political spheres that characterize modern societies, not so much representing and giving voice to their own ideas and interests, but rather articulating ideas to and for others” (3).

There is a particular focus on this final question. As Alexander explains, “theories of cultural trauma help us understand how “collective agency develops, or fails to develop, in response to the experience of social suffering” (1). The answers to these questions are not immediately known during the traumatic period and are “established through a trauma process. And concern with moral responsibility marks every step along the way. How can agents be punished and victims compensated? How can social conditions be repaired to prevent such pain from happening again?” (Alexander 1-2).

2.4 CONCLUSION

A nuanced understanding of the roles that documentary cinema, collective memory, and cultural trauma play in society allows for a greater insight into the re-imagining of Russia’s Stalinist past during perestroika, as documentary and collective memory act as contemporary reflections of how people understand this trauma. Both collective memory and documentary are powerful tools for reconstructing the past and they feed off of each other in this process. Documentaries serve as acts of commemoration, aiding in the creation of a new collective memory, and collective memory can infiltrate and affect the content of films. Both films and collective memory are imperfect, affected by the bias of those who participated in their creation, whether it is the filmmaker and crew or those who plan and participate in historical commemorations. But it is this imperfection, when carefully examined, that helps us understand the society in which both the films and the new memories of cultural trauma emerged.

3.0 THE ROLE OF THE DOCUMENTARY IN THE SOVIET UNION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Documentary cinema has played an important and often overlooked role in the history of the Soviet Union. It reflects not necessarily what was happening at the time, but rather, how contemporary events and cultural trends were interpreted and presented. In his introduction to *Forward Soviet!*, Graham Roberts explains that “if we wish to understand how the *regime* wished to be represented, then non-fiction film is central” (2; emphasis in the original). This chapter will briefly summarize the history of the genre, tracing the developments leading up to the 1980s. While this chapter will not attempt to provide a complete history of the documentary genre throughout the entire Soviet period, it recognizes that the changes that occurred during perestroika and the post-Soviet period cannot be explained without first examining the position of the documentary in Soviet culture prior to these years. I focus on broad, general trends in technology, content and political usage of films and include examples of directors and films that were influential in the development of the genre.

As this chapter is meant to provide a general overview, I will cite larger-scale studies where appropriate, rather than delving into these topics here. This is especially true in the case

of Dziga Vertov. Although an absolutely critical figure for the development of documentary, I specifically choose not to devote an extensive amount of space to Vertov, as much is already written about him and is easily accessible to English-language readers.

3.2 PRE-REVOLUTIONARY DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, cinema's function was showcasing new technology. Films were primarily what we would now call documentaries and were often static shots of everyday events. In Russia, foreign film had a significant impact on the development of the domestic film industry. Among the first films shown in Russia was the Lumière brothers' *Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat* (*L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*, 1895), screened on 4 May 1896 at a fairground in the Aquarium Park in Saint Petersburg (Beumers 5). That same year, Francis Doublier from *the Lumière Company began filming in Russia*. The first event filmed on Russian soil was the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II, which was released in 1916 under the title *Coronation of the Tsar* (*Le Couronnement du Czar*) and was screened all over Europe (Roberts 9). Four days after the coronation, a crew went to film a celebration for the tsar held at Khodynka Field. This event turned tragic following a stampede and widespread panic, which resulted in the death of up to 5,000 people by some estimates (Barnouw 14-15). The subsequent confiscation of the equipment used and film shot indicated that the authorities already understood the power of documentary film (Barnouw 15).

While the government initially viewed cinema as cheap, shallow entertainment, it soon realized that permanent theaters, longer films, and marketing films as art or educational aids could help increase profit (Roberts 9). Newsreels were made to help enhance the image of the

government. Conflicts such as widespread unrest in 1905 and the Russo-Japanese War helped bolster newsreels.²⁵ Russian studios started to produce their own domestic newsreels and films. Aleksandr Drankov founded the first Russian studio in 1907. The studio issued an ad claiming that it would feature “Current Subjects! Russian events on screen! Views of cities and countryside. New subjects every week! By request, films can be taken in any community that so desires” (Roberts 10). In 1908, the Drankov studio began to produce the first consistently distributed Russian newsreel, although much of the material was either staged or recycled French footage edited to give the impression that it was set in Russia (Roberts 11). Soon after the founding of this studio, other local and foreign groups increased their newsreel production in Russia, including Aleksandr Khanzhonkov’s studio, small local companies that produced regional newsreels, and the French company Pathé, which produced films such as *Cossacks of the Don* (*Donskie kazaki*, 1908) and *Picturesque Russia*, which was shown in England in 1908 (Roberts 10-11).

In general, early documentary in Russia served an official role. It was not about representing, but rather about recording for the purposes of making events a part of historical memory. Documentary was beloved by the tsar and was tightly controlled by his regime. For example, the crackdown following the protests in 1905 resulted in a brief hiatus of documentary film production (Roberts 10). Approximately 1,800 documentary films and newsreels were

²⁵ Despite interest in the topic, there was very little footage actually shot of the Russo-Japanese War because of secrecy, embarrassment, and the fact that Russian newsreel production units had not yet been established (Roberts 9).

issued in Russian between 1907 and World War I (Vishnevskii 198).²⁶ “Official” chronicles, including films of official ceremonies and about the tsar and his family, constituted a large number of these (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 529). These also include films that dealt with day-to-day life and official events throughout the empire, and were intended to reinforce the idea of empire (Roberts 11). During World War I, the Skobelev Committee, originally an organization designed to help war veterans, was appointed to film and distribute newsreels about the war. It produced a special war newsreel called *Mirror of War (Zerkalo voiny)* (Roberts 12).

3.3 FEBRUARY TO OCTOBER 1917

Although there was no footage shot of the 26-28 February 1917 Revolution, cameramen began filming related events as early as 1 March 1917. This footage included images of crowds and important symbols of the tsarist regime being destroyed. Cameramen sent this material to the Skobelev Committee and it was compiled into *The Great Days of the Russian Revolution (Velikie dni rossiiskoi revoliutsii)*, which was produced by the Union of Patriotic Cinematographers (Roberts 12). After the February Revolution, the Moscow and Petrograd departments of newsreels were created and cameramen filmed events with increasing skill and enthusiasm (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 529).

²⁶ For a detailed catalog of films from the period of 1907-1916, see Vishnevskii's

Dokumental'nye fil'my dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii.

At first, the Provisional Government saw the newsreel as an opportunity to promote its agenda. It formed the Department of Social Newsreels, which issued the newsreel *Free Russia* (*Svobodnaia Rossiia*). The newsreels from March 1917 included scenes of the release of political prisoners from tsarist jails, women's rights demonstrations, funerals on the Field of Mars, etc. (Roberts 12). By April, censorship increased and the content of newsreels shifted to feature more images of public speaking appearances by oppositional leaders such as Grigorii Plekhanov, Petr Kropotkin, Lev Kamenev, Lev Trotskii, Aleksandra Kollontai, and Anatolii Lunacharskii (Roberts 12).²⁷ The directors of the Skobelev Committee soon had difficulty obtaining proper support, particularly financial, for the industry from the government, despite their interest in showing a pro-government stance in the *Free Russia* newsreel. The government, for example, did not help with the organization of the screening of the first major post-February Revolution event, the Moscow May Day 1917 Parade, which ended up being organized by the city Soviet's film section (Roberts 13).

3.4 THE EARLIEST DAYS OF THE POST-OCTOBER REVOLUTION FILM INDUSTRY

Documentary cinema changed radically in the period immediately following the Revolution. One major continuity, however, was the use of documentary in an "official" capacity. Sergei

²⁷ Lenin was notably absent from the list of leaders whose speeches were frequently filmed, as he was an outlaw for much of the summer of 1917 and consequently avoided appearing on film (Roberts 13).

Drobashenko remarks in *Istoriia sovetskogo dokumental'nogo kino* that documentary film and documentalism as an aesthetic practice played a noticeable role throughout Soviet history. Events of the October Revolution, battles in the Civil War, the first successes of the young Soviet country, etc. were all captured on documentary film, long before the appearance of the first fiction films (3).

On the night of 26 October 1917, Lunacharskii signed a mandate at the Smolnii Institute about the role of cinematographic filmings in Revolutionary Petrograd (Drobashenko 4). The decision this early to use film as a means of disseminating news and information about the Soviet government signals the perceived importance of the medium. The beginning of the October Revolution²⁸ was captured on film and the film *October Uprising: The Second Revolution* (*Oktiabr'skii perevorot: Vtoraia revoliutsiia*) was released later in 1917 (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 529; Drobashenko 5). When the Bolsheviks seized power, they also took control of and began using the cinema industry to support their goals, installing Nadezhda Krupskaiia as the first head of the cinema subsection, although Lenin did not nationalize of the film industry until 1919 (Roberts 15).

The new state's film industry was not immediately successful. In the first few months after the October Revolution, cameramen filmed very little, and mostly focused on nearby battles, mourning processions, meetings at graves, etc. (Drobashenko 5). The Civil War that broke out following the Revolution made filmmaking difficult. The lack of film stock and

²⁸ The October Revolution took place on 25 October 1917 according to the Julian calendar, which was used in Russia at the time. This date corresponds with 7 November in the Gregorian calendar. Russia switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1918.

dangerous shooting conditions led to the development of a new cinematic language that included short shots and scenes, and films whose meaning and look were achieved primarily through montage rather than *mise-en-scène* (Roberts 17). The fact that workers of the pre-revolutionary film industry fled the country and often either took or destroyed equipment and film stock further exacerbated the problem (Roberts 15).

From the very beginning the Communist Party sought to use cinema not only as a means of information, but also as agitation and propaganda. Plekhanov explained the difference between propaganda and agitation as “a propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few people: an agitator presents only a few ideas, but he presents them to a whole mass of people” (qtd Roberts 15). Ellen Mickiewicz further elaborates that agitation was “to be directed to a mass audience and involves messages of limited content but wide applicability and emotional impact. Propaganda, on the other hand, is directed to small numbers of ‘politically literate’ individuals, and it involves complicated theoretical messages” (qtd McNair 17). The main goal of both agitation and propaganda was to educate the masses and, according to Lenin, “practically show how we need to build socialism” (*prakticheski pokazat' kak nado sotsializm stroit'*) (qtd Drobashenko 8). As Jeremy Hicks notes, “in stark contrast to the liberal conception of journalism prevalent in the West, the Bolsheviks never considered objectivity, independence or freedom of the press to be a primary consideration” (*Dziga Vertov* 9).

The logistics of how to use cinema as agitation/propaganda, including how to fund and distribute it, were the subject of debate during this time period. Moscow, more so than Petrograd, became the center for new Soviet Cinema. In March 1918 the Cinema Committee (*Kinokomitet*) was founded in Moscow and the production of the first Soviet newsreel, *Cinema Weekly* (*Kinonedelia*) began (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 529). By August 1919, the

committee's work extended far beyond the reaches of Moscow and its name was changed to the All-Russian Cinema Committee, and on 18 September 1919 Lunacharskii issued a decree that once again changed the committee's name, this time to the All-Russian Photographic and Cinematicographic Section of the Council of Ministers (*Vserossiiskii fotokinematograficheskii otдел Narkomprosa*) or VFKO (Taylor 49). This effectively put the committee directly under government control.

The *Cinema Weekly* newsreel came out approximately four times a month and ran from 1918 through 1919, with a total of 43 editions. It was originally edited by Mikhail Kol'tsov and later by Dziga Vertov (Drobashenko 6). Other famous directors, cameramen, and journalists also worked on the project, including Eduard Tisse, Lev Kuleshov, Aleksandr Levitskii, Aleksandr Lemberg, Grigorii Boltianskii, Vladimir Garin, and others (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 529). *Cinema Weekly* directly focused on matters important to the new state and its central goals were to show how the new regime was a permanent establishment and to give the Party an accessible, human image by featuring segments on important leaders (Roberts 16).

3.5 1920S: EXPERIMENTATION AND THE SEARCH FOR CINEMATIC LANGUAGE

The 1920s were a critical era in both Soviet and global documentary production and this decade greatly influenced how documentary developed as a genre. The film that was considered to be the first feature-length documentary, Robert Flaherty's 79-minute long *Nanook of the North* (1922), set the stage for the changes in documentary that would appear in the 1920s. Flaherty

demonstrated the viability of an extended examination of a non-fiction topic. Directors in the Soviet Union built on this concept and experimented with different forms of cinematic language.

The 1920s were also a period of figuring out how best to use documentary for revolutionary purposes. Ideas supposedly espoused by Lenin were used to justify the focus on documentary cinema. Grigorii Boltianskii's book *Lenin and Cinema (Lenin i kino, 1925)* includes Lunacharskii's "Conversation with Lenin." The often cited quote "of all the arts, for us cinema is the most important" comes from this article, as does the idea of the "Leninist Film Proportion." Lunacharskii wrote "he once more underlined the need to determine a definite proportion between entertainment films and scientific ones... Vladimir Ilyich told me that the production of new films imbued with Communist ideas and reflecting Soviet reality should begin with the newsreel..." (qtd Taylor and Christie 57).

The film industry saw major changes in its organization during this period, as it was slowly nationalized. GTK, the State Film School, was founded in 1919 and headed by Vladimir Gardin (Beumers 40).²⁹ Goskino (The Central State Film and Photo Enterprise [*Tsentral'noe gosudarstvennoe kinofotopredpriiatie*]) was established in 1922 for the purpose of distributing films (Beumers 40). Sovkino (The All-Russian Photo-Cinematic Stock Company [*Vserossiiskoe fotokinematograficheskoe aktsionernoe obshchetsvo*]) was formed by decree on 13 June 1924 and replaced Goskino, ending the autonomy of the Moscow and Leningrad film studios (Roberts 32).

²⁹ This later became VGIK (*Vsesoiuznyi gosudarstvennyi institut kinematografii*/The All-Union State Institute of Cinematography).

The Party continued to tighten control over cinema and in November 1925 launched ODSK (the Society of Friends of Soviet Cinema [*Obshchestvo družei sovetskogo kino*]), led by Feliks Dzerzhinskii, the head of the secret police. Their goal was to “raise the mass’s interest in Soviet film” (Taylor and Christie 121). The Party Conference on Cinema was held in March 1928. The meeting was led by section head Aleksandr Krinitskii, who urged that cinema “must be a weapon for the organization of the masses” (qtd Roberts 74). The final conference resolution stated that documentary films were “one of the most powerful media for the dissemination and popularization of general and technical knowledge, its production must be faultlessly organized; in terms of its content the accessibility of cultural film to the broad audience must be preserved” (qtd Taylor and Christie 211).

Directors took several different approaches to documentary cinema in the 1920s. Dziga Vertov, a pseudonym for David Kaufman, was one of the leading directors and writers of cinema theory at the time. His work has come to be some of the best-known examples of documentary from the 1920s and has had a long-lasting influence on the genre, such as in the development of the *cinéma vérité* style. As so much has been written on him in English-language scholarship, this chapter will attempt to be brief in its discussion of his role.³⁰

Vertov’s film theories focused on presenting reality on screen in a way that would be, he thought, intelligible to the masses. This involved a focus on non-fiction cinema and portraying life as it is without actors or scripts, in a manner that only the camera-eye, as opposed to the human eye, could see. His use of editing, as Hicks writes in his description of *Cine-truth*, “transforms non-fiction film from a means primarily of recording and informing into a powerful

³⁰ For more information on Vertov, see Jeremy Hicks’ *Dziga Vertov*.

tool of persuasion and exhortation” (*Dziga Vertov* 7-8). Vertov formed a group of *kinoks*, others involved in the cinema industry who followed his filmmaking theories, including Elizaveta Svilova, Mikhail Kaufman, Aleksei Lemberg, Ivan Beliakov, P. Zotov, E. Baranetsevich, A. Kagarlitskii, B. Kudinov, B. Komarov and later, Il’ia Kopalín and a few others (Drobashenko 10). The group published their most important documents, such as their manifesto “We” (“My”) from 1922-1923 (Drobashenko 24). Vertov’s newsreel, *Cine-Truth* (*Kinopravda*), ran from 1922-1925 (Kovalov, “Dokumental’noe” 529). The Party encouraged Vertov’s newsreel efforts and in 1923 called it “an illustrated living newspaper... A newspaper with which none of the printed journals can compete. Neither can still photography. In a newsreel information is totally visual and thus accessible to the masses” (qtd Roberts 29). Vertov also made several films in the 1920s demonstrating his particular philosophy about filmmaking, including *Cine-Eye* (*Kino-glaz*, 1924), *Forward, Soviet!* (*Shagai, Sovet!*, 1926), *One-Sixth of the World* (*Shestaia chast’ mira*, 1926), *The Eleventh Year* (*Odinnadtsatyi*, 1928), and *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*, 1929).³¹

³¹ Although Vertov is now seen as an influential figure in documentary, his work was not well received by the international documentary community at first. Brian Winston writes that “Everywhere informed opinion misunderstood and dismissed Vertov’s work... Grierson concluded that ‘Vertov has pushed the argument to a point at which it becomes ridiculous.’... So dominant was Grierson’s vision of documentary that Vertov’s long-form work was seen in the West at the time as being not of the same order at all” (*Claiming* 168). Their styles were so different that Winston draws a distinction between the Vertovian documentary tradition and the

Vertov's kinoks were actively making films in the 1920s. For example, in 1927-28 Mikhail Kaufman and Il'ia Kopalín made their first film, a poetic work called *Moscow (Moskva)*, at Sovkino (Roberts 79). Kaufman and Kopalín acted as painters, using Barnouw's definition as discussed in chapter 1, and Drobashenko describes this film as reminiscent of Ruttman's *Berlin: Symphony of a Big City* (22). Kopalín later made a documentary with Belnikov about the anniversary celebrations of 1927 called *A Holiday of the Millions (Prazdnik millionov)*, which was a visualization of the power of the masses (Roberts 80). Both of these films are a part of a subgenre that Drobashenko calls "expeditionary films" (*ekspeditsionnaia kartina*). In these primarily expository films, the directors are both explorers, examining a particular culture, and reporters, proclaiming the achievements of the Soviet Union. The expeditionary film was not exclusively made by *kinoks*, but rather the mass release of such films was a defining characteristic of the second half of the 1920s in documentary cinema (Drobashenko 20). The first of these films were generally about the Soviet republics, such as Soviet Armenia, Soviet Azerbaijan, etc., but then expanded to areas outside of the Soviet Union (Drobashenko 20). These films were meant to show the positive impact the Soviet government has had on different communities. A. A. Cherkasov's unreleased film *Solovki (Solovetskie lageria osobovogo naznacheniiia, 1928)* takes the viewer on a journey to the Solovki prison camp, where prisoners were being re-educated to become model Soviet citizens. Films such as Mikhail Kalatozov's *Salt for Svanetiia (Sol' Svanetii, 1930)* and Viktor Turin's *Turksib* (1929) focus on how bringing

Griersonian. For further information on the characteristics of these traditions, see Winston "Introduction."

advancements in technology to rural areas in the republics drastically improved the lives of locals.³²

One of the most prominent films that focused on life outside of the Soviet Union was Iakov Bliokh's *Shanghai Document* (*Shankhaiskii dokument*, 1929), about the people's uprising in 1927 in Shanghai (Roberts 81). Vladimir Erofeev, who had been the head of Sovkino's Leningrad documentary section, also made a series of expedition films, including *Beyond the Arctic Circle* (*Za arkticheskim krugom*, 1927), *The Roof of the World* (*Krisha mira*, 1928), *Afghanistan* (*Afganistan*, 1929) and *The Heart of Asia* (*Serditse azii*, 1929) (Roberts 83). Roberts explained that these filmmakers were somewhat of a "new wave," still presenting life as it happens, but in a much more straightforward manner and a less consistently serious tone (83). These films were films of "attraction," that Orientalized and documented the exotic "other."

Esfir' Shub was a prominent filmmaker who took a different approach to documentary. Her work also greatly influenced the development of the genre. Drobashenko describes another artistic direction emerging in documentary that corresponded with the appearance of Shub's first film in the late 1920s (24). Shub had originally worked at reediting and re-titling foreign films to make them ideologically appropriate before beginning work editing Soviet fiction films in 1924 (Roberts 50). Stella Bruzzi writes that, in doing this type of editing, she applied to non-fiction

³² Ian Christie describes *Turksib* as the "most influential" documentary of this time period, significantly more so than Vertov's work (168). The film had an impact on Grierson's filmmaking. Ian Aitken suggests that "the influence of *Turksib* has been underrated" and that Turin "demonstrated on the screen how Grierson's theoretic vision of a bridge between epic cinema and documentary might be constructed in practice" (qtd Winston 56).

Eisenstein's "montage of attractions" (22). She asserted that documentary is not only "a source of genuine enlightenment, it was by its choice of material a far more persuasive propaganda tool" and that "the qualities of the 'author'... must include 'political literacy'" (qtd Roberts 68). In 1927, when filmmakers were tasked with coming up with a way to commemorate the Revolution, Shub took on the challenge. Her resulting film was *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927). Shub created her film entirely from archival footage of the tsarist era. As Pierre Nora reminds us, part of collective memory involves how groups remember their past (qtd Le Goff 95). In this film, Shub completely remakes the recent history. Drobashenko explains that new meanings of the images were created in two ways: first in the use of intertitles, which were often voiced as "ironic or sarcastic, caustic, mean" ("*ironichnoi ili sarkasticheskoi, edkoi, zloi*") and disconnected from the images themselves, and second in the juxtaposition of images, such as the contrast between the upper class and the poor (25). *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* was a well-received and popular film that triggered debate about what the form and content of Soviet documentaries should be.³³

The early and mid-1920s were a golden era of Soviet documentary. By the end of the decade, cultural authorities were increasingly calling for clearer ideological messages in films and for better censorship. At the first All-Union Meeting of Cinematographers in March 1928, they discussed the need for a "clear and sustained ideological line" (*chetkaia i vyderzhannaia ideologicheskaiia liniia*) and afterward censorship became much more strict and the number of banned films significantly increased (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 530). Editorials published in

³³ Hicks notes that it was the first feature-length Soviet documentary to enjoy success both with audiences and critics (*Dziga Vertov* 53).

1929 in the journal *Soviet Screen* (*Sovetskii ekran*) made it clear that non-fiction films needed to be part of the cultural revolution and, as part of that, needed to be simple and accessible in order to address the millions (Roberts 85). Attempts to figure out how to negotiate these boundaries led to the massive changes that swept through the documentary industry beginning in the 1930s.

3.6 THE 1930S THROUGH THE GREAT PATRIOTIC WAR: CENTRALIZATION AND SIMPLIFICATION

Documentary film transformed dramatically over the course of the Stalin-era. These changes were spurred by discussions and decisions made in the early to mid-1930s about how to make films accessible to everyone, both in terms of their content and in making cinemas available.³⁴

By this point, the need for cinema to become financially self-sufficient was becoming increasingly apparent and films that were intelligible would probably be more commercially successful. Inspiration for how to achieve this goal came from Georgii Vasil'ev and Sergei Vasil'ev's 1934 fiction film *Chapaev*, which was praised as the ideal for cinema combining

³⁴ One phenomenon of film distribution in the 1930s was the reappearance of film trains. They began by decree on 29 December 1931 and acted as a film studio on wheels, completely equipped for production and screening. Their slogan was “we shoot today--we show tomorrow” (Roberts 119). Under the direction of Aleksandr Medvedkin, the train set out on its first trip on 15 January 1932 with more than fifty works of different film-related professions (Drobashenko 33). The film-train made twelve visits to building sites of the first Five Year Plan and made seventy-two films in its first year (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 531).

entertainment with enlightenment. According to *Pravda*, it was a film that could “mobilize for the fulfillment of new tasks and explain about the achievements, as about the difficulties of socialist construction” (qtd Roberts 127). In praising this film, Central Committee secretary Andreev said “in our own pictures we must show genuine life, the genuine lives of people,” but this life must be dramatized and carefully scripted (qtd Roberts 127). The term “simply and clearly” (*prosto i iasno*) began to appear more and more frequently, particularly as it applied to documentary (Roberts 109).

While, as Hicks explained, documentary has always been a combination of artistic reworking and fact (*Dziga Vertov* 15), documentaries of the 1930s were marked by increasing artifice and optimism. Hicks notes that starting in the late 1920s Soviet authorities embraced an approach to cinema that was similar to the German *Kulturfilm*, which was “synonymous with the notion of popular, accessible films with an educational purpose and correct political content” (*Dziga Vertov* 62). Although documentary filmmakers resisted this term as a description of their work, blurring of lines between documentary and acted remained. Films such as Kalatozov’s *Salt for Svanetia*, about a real community in the village of Ushguli, featured staged footage for the majority of the film (Roberts 114). Similarly, Joris Ivens’ documentary *A Song About Heroes* (*Pesn’ o geroiakh*, 1932), filmed in Magnitogorsk, features approximately fifty percent documentary material and fifty percent staged drama, which falls towards the imagination side of Winston’s spectrum, and it is difficult to tell which is which (Roberts 115). The artificiality of the films was not only in the staged materials, but also in what they did not show. For example, Kopalín previously openly discussed problems associated with collectivization in his films, but in his *The Village Zametchino* (*Selo Zametchino*, 1935) and *Blooming Honor Bearer*

(*Tsvetushchaia ordenonosnaia*, 1938), he chose to focus solely on successes and achievements (Drobashenko 49).

The focus on controlling the content of film led to changes in the film industry, including increased censorship. Oleg Kovalov notes the particular effect of censorship on newsreels, writing that as soon as someone became an “enemy,” their image disappeared, even from documentary films. He writes, for example, that by the 1980s there was a whole generation who did not even know what Lev Trotskii looked like (“Dokumental'noe” 530). As Yosef Yerushalmi reminds us, while certain memories live on, others die out as a result of many potential factors, including repression. This censorship was one way of attempting to delete these individuals from collective memory. The increased centralization of the industry was evident in the June 1930 change from Sovkino to Soiuzkino, the associated purge, and the installation of Boris Shumiatskii as the new head of Souizkino (Roberts 113).

Changes in technology also transformed documentary cinema in the 1930s. The biggest change was the introduction of sound. Documentary filmmakers were initially very enthusiastic about using sound. The first major Soviet sound documentary was Vertov’s *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbassa*), released in April 1931. As Vertov had done with the visual in *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), *Enthusiasm* was also a film in the reflexive mode, highlighting and celebrating the innovations of sound technology. It uses sound in a unique way, such as in “the repetition and the detachment of industrial sound from its source and its use as a motif” (*Dziga Vertov* 76). This new technology was not without its major drawbacks, including that it was very difficult to shoot documentary sound, particularly outdoors, and the new sound technology also required a new screening technology, which was not available outside of the major metropolitans (Roberts 99; 107). Hicks writes that initial

reactions to *Enthusiasm* were hostile, which was possibly caused by the poor sound qualities at the screening facilities (*Dziga Vertov* 73).

The ability to use sound helped establish the defining characteristic feature of documentary films of the Stalin era and beyond: the totalizing voiceover.³⁵ The voiceover narrator was nearly always male and always authoritative.³⁶ It represented not the voice of the filmmaker, but rather the voice of the state. This voice was meant to leave no room for interpretation of the images on screen and it directed audiences towards the “proper” conclusions and understanding of the films.

The 1930s saw filmmakers of the 1920s falling out of favor with the authorities. Some of this had to do with the 1930 purges of the film industry associated with the change from Sovkino to Souizkino. “Older” cinema workers found fewer and fewer opportunities for work in the industry (Roberts 109). Directors such as Vertov were attacked for their supposed formalism and “documentalism,” defined as “documentary as a distinct tradition promising privileged access to the real” (qtd Hicks, *Dziga Vertov* 83). Critic Nikolai Lebedev wrote in “For a Proletarian Cinema of Fact” that “the documentalists are only looking at the world; the point however is to change it,” and the editors of *Proletarskoe kino* accused documentalists of following an “illiterate, presumptuous and excessively pretentious theory” (qtd Roberts 101-102). Shub was specifically criticized for her tendency to build arguments gradually, an

³⁵ For an analysis of the negative reputation of voice-over in documentary in general, see Bruzzi chapter 2: “Narration: The film and its voice.”

³⁶ Radio announcer Iurii Levitan was called by Hicks the “most official of all Soviet voice-over men” (“Challenging” 134).

approach that was not compatible with the call for “simple and clear” films (Roberts 122). Both Vertov and Shub unsuccessfully attempted to make films to fit within the new rules. Vertov came out with *Three Songs about Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Lenine*, 1934) and *Lullaby* (*Kolybel'naia*, 1938), but they were met with continued criticism. Shub’s *Land of the Soviets* (*Strana sovetov*, 1937), released for the twentieth anniversary of the Revolution, is described by Roberts as a “quintessential Stalinist epic” and by Drobashenko as an “inferior variant” of her *The Great Way* (*Velikii put'*, 1927) (qtd Roberts 130).

Several new filmmakers who would become instrumental, such as Roman Karmen entered the film industry in the 1930s. One of the major similarities these new directors shared with one another was an affiliation with the Communist Party. While neither Vertov nor Shub became Party members, many directors were either already members, including Bliokh (1918) and Medvedkin (1920s), or were given membership after a few years, like Karmen, who joined the Party in 1939 (Roberts 122).

Karmen became one of the most influential directors in the history of the Soviet Union. He directed dozens of films and taught in the documentary directors’ section at the Institute of Cinematography beginning in the 1960s. He worked until his death in 1978, but his writing and work were prominent at the Institute well into the 1990s (Roberts 118). He was well-liked by the authorities and was given funding for fifteen films in an eight-year period, when many other directors struggled to find work in the industry at all (Roberts 118).

3.7 WORLD WAR II: MOBILIZING DOCUMENTARY

Documentary played an absolutely critical role during World War II, not only in the Soviet Union, but worldwide. Barnouw describes documentarians of this era as advocates and buglers. In the Soviet Union, while major film studios packed up and moved into exile, documentary cameramen were sent to the front lines.³⁷ Within the first few months of the war, there were 260 cameramen deployed (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 531). Soviet filmmakers began documenting Nazi war atrocities in 1941 (Hicks, *First Films* 6). By the middle of the war, there were approximately 400 Soviet cameramen working on the front lines and their footage was turned into newsreels and documentaries (Barnouw 151). This led to a documentary revival. Documentaries outnumbered fiction films in viewership and films were shown in makeshift locations, such as in metro station bomb shelters (Barnouw 152). Famous directors, associated both with fiction and nonfiction films, turned to documentary during this period, including Aleksandr Dovzhenko, Karmen, who served as the war coverage coordinator, and Medvedkin. The casualties were heavy for frontline cameramen. More than one hundred cameramen died serving in the war. Every fourth cameraman was killed and every other was seriously wounded (Mikhailov and Fomin 4).

War documentaries were released before the Soviet Union was officially involved in the war, beginning with films about the fighting in Spain, where Karmen filmed a significant amount of frontline footage (Roberts 136). After the Soviet Union joined the war, films focused on creating both the figure of the heroic Soviet citizen protecting his homeland and the figure of the

³⁷ For a detailed account of the role of cameramen during World War II, see Mikhailov and Fomin's *Tsena kadra*.

enemy (Drobashenko 52). This type of film helped to cement this particular image of the hero in the people's memory. Kopalin's *Defeat of the Germans near Moscow (Razgrom nemetskikh voisk pod Moskvoi, 1942)* was the first feature-length Soviet documentary of the war (Hicks, *First Films* 64). A re-edited version, titled *Moscow Strikes Back*, won an Oscar in 1943 and was widely shown in the United States (Hicks, *First Films* 64). Dovzhenko's *Battle for our Soviet Ukraine (Bitva za nashu sovetskuiu Ukrainu, 1943)* was another powerful example of documentary cinema at this time (Hicks, *First Films* 108). In the final period of the war, from 1944-1945, the primary topic of these documentaries became stories about successful military offenses and the Soviet Army's liberating missions (Drobashenko 57).

From the end of World War II through the death of Stalin, the character of documentary films continued to evolve. Although there was a period of rebuilding after the war, there was not a period of cine-anemia (*malokartin'e*) in documentary as there was in fiction films. There were more than seventy films produced annually and around one hundred editions of newsreels such as *News of the Day (Novosti dnia)*, *Pioneers (Pioneriia)*, *Soviet Sport (Sovetskii sport)* (Drobashenko 59). These films, however, were subject to ever increasing censorship and many completely lacked any sort of conflict (*bezkonfliktnost'*). Hicks calls this time period a nadir of Soviet documentary cinema, as a result of the fact that "typically, longer films were stylistically undistinguished recordings of particular events" (Vertov 120).

Beginning March 1946, Ivan Bolshakov, the first Minister of Cinematography held an "artistic council" that met weekly. Roberts describes the result of this council's meetings as "a system of serial censorship at script, crew, production and post-production level... overlaid on a system of suspicion and uncertainty" (139). The key characteristics of post-war documentaries were, according to Drobashenko, "declarativeness and illustrativeness" (*deklarativnost' i*

illustrativnost'), with the display of technology pushing people to the background (66). He also claims that films began to resort to dogmatic, normative systems (61). Films focused on the triumphs of reconstruction, such as in Mikhail Bilinskii's *Donbas* (1946), Vasilii Beliaev's *Master of the High Harvest* (*Mastera vysokikh urozhaev*, 1947), and Ol'ga Podgoretskaia and Manuel' Bol'shintsov's *Dneproges* (1948) (Roberts 138). More important than what these films were about was what these films left out. Drobashenko writes that, when we compare these films to the facts we now know about the era, so much was absent from the screen (60). Documentaries did not answer important contemporary questions, nor did they explore challenging topics (Drobashenko 64). This was a problem that continued into the post-Stalin era.

3.8 THE 1950S: GLIMMERS OF CHANGE

The 1950s was an era of conservatism in global documentary (Jacobs 276). In the case of the Soviet Union, this was very much a transitional period. There was, on the one hand, a blossoming of the genre due to a revival of Leninist norms in all areas as part of Khrushchev's de-Stalinization program, and due to changes in technology and increased television viewership (Drobashenko 64). On the other hand, the content of these films remained rather conservative, particularly towards the beginning of the Thaw period.

The major technological invention that affected the direction of documentary cinema was the creation of new film equipment. Developments in the late 1950s led to lightweight, handheld 16 mm cameras and compact sound recorders. They could record synchronous sound quickly, easily, and cheaply and the work could be done by one person instead of an entire crew (Jacobs

376). Although this technology came about in the 1950s, it would prove to be even more instrumental to changes in the genre in the 1960s.

The 1950s also marked a shift in who was considered prominent documentarians. Many of the “greats” of early Soviet documentary ended their careers shortly after Stalin’s death. Vertov died in 1954 and Shub made her last film in 1953 (Roberts 140). In the middle of the 1950s, several new documentary directors came out of VGIK, including Viktor Lisakovich, Liia Derbysheva, Leonid Makhnach and A. Kosachev (Drobashenko 70). Some of their works demonstrated a return to poetic direction, focusing less on an explicit concrete storyline and more on visual associations, which was especially evident in films of the republics’ studios (Drobashenko 70). Pavel Kogan, Petr Mostovoi, Nikolai Obukhovich, Herz Frank, and Artavazd Peleshian were among other new faces in the industry (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 535).

Documentary of the 1950s attempted to walk a very thin line. Films generally tended to stay clear of controversial politics. They did, however, sometimes grapple with contemporary reality and its hardships, while still presenting it in a positive light. Drobashenko writes that the most important problem of documentary cinema in this time period was the treatment of life’s conflicts and that documentary started to pay more attention to the open expression of the conflict, which came from the realm of production (72). Many films, particularly those coming out of the Soviet republics, featured “simple” people and their lives. Drobashenko describes the tendency of films at this time period for bringing together the hero and atmosphere, giving the viewer the opportunity to see the interrelatedness of people and their surrounding realities, and exploring the social significance of such characters (69; 71). One film that is particularly evident of this change was Karmen’s *A Tale of Caspian Oil* (*Povest' o neftianikakh Kaspiia*, 1953).

Drobashenko writes of *A Tale of Caspian Oil*

The very appearance of this film testified to the fact that in documentary film there were new tendencies in the reflection of reality, that significant, indigenous processes were happening. The film *A Tale of Caspian Oil* was a turning point in this direction in the history of Soviet film publicistics. (67)^{38, 39}

A Tale of Caspian Oil, a film made in the expository mode, tells the story of many different people in many different professions and is unique in its presentation of the material. Drobashenko points to the image of tractor drivers in particular, explaining that instead of the traditional smiling face, Karmen shows tired, unshaven heroes, wearing dirty clothes rather than typical parade costumes. As opposed to declaring the successes of the heroes, Karmen shows his characters in all the dramatic circumstances of their life and their work (67). Another example of a film of this type is Roman Grigor'ev and Iosif Posel'skii's *Happiness of the Difficult Road* (*Schast'e trudnykh dorog*, 1955), about the meaning of life and happiness, as expressed by a variety of different people, both famous and not. This film attempts to find something unique about the character and fate of the Soviet person, comparing people from different regions, backgrounds, and other circumstances. It turned autobiographical memory and experience of individuals into the story of the Soviet Union. *Happiness* received widespread attention, was

³⁸ “Сам факт появления этого фильма свидетельствовал о том, что в документальном кино наметились новые тенденции отображения действительности, что в нем происходят значительные, коренные процессы. Фильм «Повесть о нефтяниках Каспия» явился в этом направлении переломным в истории советской кинопублицистики.”

³⁹All translations from Russian-language sources are my own, unless otherwise noted. I have included the original Russian in the footnotes for all translated citations.

translated into different languages, and shown at the festival of youth and students in Warsaw in 1955 (Drobashenko 69).

3.9 THE 1960S: THE FLOURISHING OF DOCUMENTARY

Documentary cinema in the 1960s was characterized by the proliferation of documentary film studios and the number of documentary films produced, as well as an increase in the importance of the concept of “author” in documentary. Galina Prozhiko writes of this time period that “although a vow of faith to facts is written on the banners of documentarians of the 1960s, in practice this time also serves as a period of formation of bright, creative, individual style” (*Kontsepsiia* 327).⁴⁰

The way television approached the making of documentaries also changed in the 1960s. Brian McNair briefly describes the evolution of the television industry in the Soviet Union. The first experimental broadcast took place on 1 May 1931 and regular broadcasting began 10 March 1939 to one hundred television sets in Moscow. Although development was interrupted by the Great Patriotic War, the first post-war Five Year Plan, adopted 18 March 1946, sought to expand broadcasting. New television centers were built in Leningrad, Kiev, and Sverdlovsk, and by the end of 1955, centers were under construction in major cities in most of the republics. Television, however, did not move to the forefront until the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1960 and 1981, the

⁴⁰ “хотя на знаменах документалистики 60-х годов написана клятва верности факту, на практике это время существует и как период формирования ярких творческих индивидуальных почерков.”

number of domestic television sets increased from 4.8 million to 75 million (McNair 48). Marina Goldovskaia notes a very important event in the development of television documentaries: the 1968 formation of the studio Ekran, a division within the State Committee for Television and Radio. Ekran was comprised of four separate units: narrative, animation, musical, and documentary film (*Woman* 52). She recalls how the studio hired talented directors, scriptwriters and cameramen who were either recent graduates from VGIK or were more established directors working in the provinces (*Woman* 52). Ekran was one of the best technically equipped studios in the Soviet Union and provided its employees with modern, mostly French and German, technology with which to work (Golvoskaya 76-77).

In the 1960s, the Soviet Union was the world leader in documentary film production. There were approximately twenty-five newsreel and documentary studios that produced over forty different documentary newsreels and over three hundred films annually (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 535). Eighty percent of financing for these films came from Goskino. A large number of films came not from Moscow, but rather from other cities and even from the periphery of the Soviet Union. Documentary film schools were formed in Leningrad Sverdlovsk, Riga, and the republics of Armenia, and Kyrgyzstan (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 535). Generally speaking, working away from the major cities, such as Moscow and Leningrad, allowed filmmakers more freedom (Christie 170). In Moscow, documentary film theaters showed movies for ten kopeks, special theaters opened across the country and documentaries were also shown on television (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 535). Half of the documentaries worldwide were made in the Soviet Union (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 535). Soviet documentaries were also gaining some popularity on a global scale, such as Frank's films, some of which were accepted for international film festivals (Drobashenko 84).

With this proliferation of documentary film studios came discussion about the very essence of documentary. Drobashenko writes that these conversations reflected a search for new styles and ways that the author⁴¹ thinks about what was going on in the world (81). Prozhiko explains the dialectic that characterizes documentary in the 1960s:

First, the desire for an adequate picture of reality, and a variety of gimmicks and techniques of the observing camera are directed towards this end, and secondly, the need for independent judgment, one's own artistic or journalistic concept of what is seen, and this caused an intense search for an individual perspective on the organization of the material, a personal subjective treatment. (*Kontseptsiia* 326)⁴²

Traditional narrative, epic genres tended to fade away in favor of presenting history as it affected the lives of the people (Drobashenko 81). This way of showing discussing the past integrated individual memories in the collective memory of an event. Films began to experiment again

⁴¹ In my discussion of the film author, I follow David Bordwell's definition of "the *author* as a structure in the film's system. Not that the author is represented as a biographical individual... but rather the author becomes a formal component, the overriding intelligence organizing the film for our comprehension" (777).

⁴² «во-первых, жажда адекватной картины реальности, и на это направлены разнообразные ухищрения и приемы наблюдающей камеры, и, во-вторых, потребность самостоятельного суждения, своей художественной или публицистической концепции увиденного, и этим вызваны напряженные поиски индивидуального ракурса организации материала, личной субъективной его трактовки.»

with techniques typically used in direct cinema, *cinéma vérité* or a poetic mode of documentary, such as hidden cameras, interaction with the subjects, and filming without directorial commentary, while exploring relatively safe topics, such as the lives of individuals and foreign politics.

During the 1960s an increasing trend in world documentary was the rise of *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema.⁴³ This was the result of some of the technological advances made in the previous decade, particularly in terms of lighter weight cameras and synchronous sound recording.⁴⁴ Lewis Jacobs argues that the documentaries of the 1960s helped to sort out some extremely difficult times, such as the Cold War, the U-2 crisis, the Kennedy assassination, and controversial topics, such as poverty, the alienation of youth, and drug use (368). Although these types of topics would not be explored in the same depth in the Soviet Union until perestroika,

⁴³ This represented somewhat of a return to the Soviet Union's rich history of the genre. As Bill Nichols explains, "the term *kinopravda* returned to common use through the homage paid to Vertov by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin when they named their new form of documentary filmmaking *cinéma vérité* (French for *kinopravda*)" (218).

⁴⁴ Marina Goldovskaia writes of the impact of this technology development that "When I started out, documentary film could hardly be called 'documentary.' Almost all of it was staged. It was practically impossible to work differently with the existing equipment. But in the mid-1960s, things started to change.... Documentary film, limited by the awkwardness of 35mm technology, did not overcome the use of staging. It was the introduction of the 16mm equipment in television that provided the opportunity to change all that" (*Woman* 58).

aspects of both direct cinema and cinéma vérité entered the cinematic language of Soviet documentary in the 1960s.

Drawing on the direct cinema movement, several films made in the 1960s utilized secret cameras for shooting. Semen Aranovich's *Today is the Premier* (*Segodnia--prem'era*, 1965), gave a behind-the-scenes look at the Bol'shoi dramaticheskii teatr with Georgii Tovstanogov. Pavel Kogan and Petr Mostovoi's 1966 film *Glance at the Face* (*Vzglianite na litso*) used a hidden camera to capture the reactions of visitors to the Hermitage Museum as they gazed at Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*.

Girgorii Chukhrai's *Memory* (*Pamiat'*, 1969) is shot in the participatory mode, as explained in chapter 1, and relies on cinéma vérité conventions, particularly the filmmaker intervening with the participants. Chukhrai decided to make a film about the Battle of Stalingrad, but was having difficulty figuring out how to make it a non-fiction film. He decided to go to Paris and the Place de la Bataille-de-Stalingrad, where he interviewed people. He asked "What is Stalingrad?" and received no satisfactory answers (Barnouw 258). This interview material was combined with archival footage of the battle to create the film.⁴⁵

Another style of documentary and filmmaking technique of the 1960s was the poetic mode of documentary and attention to different types of montage. Prozhiko refers to this particular type of poetic cinema as "film-reflection" (*fil'm-razmyshlenie*) or "film essay" (*fil'm-esse*), where the argument is secondary to the form of the film and free association between

⁴⁵ This particular technique would return and feature prominently in some films of the perestroika era.

scenes and images structures the film (*Kontseptsiia* 306). This was particularly the case in the films of the Armenian film director Peleshian.

Peleshian began his filmmaking career in the 1960s. He directed one of his earliest films, *The Beginning* (*Nachalo*, 1967), which gained international fame, while he was a student at VGIK (Kovalov, “Dokumental'noe” 535). This is also the film that he cites as the beginning of his distinctive technique of “distance montage” (MacDonald 96). Peleshian describes distance montage as

Eisenstein's montage was linear, like a chain. Distance montage creates a magnetic field around the film... Sometimes I don't call my method “montage.” I'm involved in a process of creating unity. In a sense I've eliminated montage: by creating the film through montage, I have destroyed montage. In the totality, in the wholeness of one of my films, there is no montage, no collision, so as a result montage has been destroyed. In Eisenstein every element means something. For me the individual fragments don't mean anything anymore. Only the whole film has the meaning.... For me, distance montage opens up the mysteries of the movement of the universe. I can feel how everything is made and put together; I can sense its rhythmic movement. (qtd MacDonald 102)

In his introduction to an interview with Peleshian, Scott MacDonald more succinctly describes this technique as “Peleshian arranges individual shots and sound bites so that while no narrative or polemical continuity is immediately apparent, an overall vision gradually evolves. Images and sounds are repeated, always in new contexts, until the entirety of Peleshian's sense of a subject... can be comprehended” (MacDonald 94).

Another direction that Soviet documentary took during the 1960s was an interest in political films, particularly those that focus on foreign politics (Drobashenko 83). The film that falls into this category that has come to be the most important historically is Mikhail Romm's *Ordinary Fascism* (*Obiknovennii fashizm*, 1965), which was released in 1966. This film, on the surface, is an exploration of the development of Nazi-era fascism in Germany. It captured the attention of viewers all over the world. While it was interesting for its unique photographs and film clips from the archives of the Soviet Union, Poland, and Germany, Drobashenko writes that it was popular because of its new perspective in covering the events of history (78). This happens both in terms of the style and the content of the film.

Ordinary Fascism draws on several documentary and fiction film traditions. The first is the use of montage of archival footage to contradict its original meaning, pioneered by Shub. The second is Sergei Eisenstein's "montage of attractions," where every scene is organized in a way that elicits the most emotional reaction from viewers (Kovalov, "Dokumental'noe" 536). The film makes use of the direct cinema style of hidden cameras to capture footage of contemporary Muscovites. The director, and writers Iurii Khaniutin and Maia Turovskaia, also added their very personal touch: Romm's own voice as the off screen narrator. Kovalov characterizes the effect as instead of "the narrator familiar to the viewer instructively broadcasting truisms, sounded the thoughtful, almost 'homey,' often sarcastic or ironic voice of Romm himself" ("Dokumental'noe" 536).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "привычного зрителю диктора, назидательно вещающего прописные истины, звучал раздумчивый, почти "домашний," часто саркастичный или ироничный голос самого Ромма."

Romm, Khaniutin, and Turovskaia approach the topic as an exploration, as opposed to an exposition, of history. *Ordinary Fascism* is an examination of the role of the “little man” in history. Unlike other historical films that present a chronicle of events, Drobashenko explains, *Ordinary Fascism* does not have a plot in the traditional sense, but rather that it “step by step studies the mechanism driving the bourgeois government apparatus on the individual, showing psychological manipulation techniques used for the conversion of the individual into a person blindly and obediently following his Fuhrer” (Drobashenko 79).⁴⁷ In doing so, the film indirectly draws parallels between Nazi fascism and the Soviet regime.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ “шаг за шагом исследуют механизм воздействия буржуазного государственного аппарата на личность, показывают, какие приемы психологической обработки применялись для превращения личности в обывателя, слепо и покорно следующего за своим фюрером.”

⁴⁸ In 1968 *Ordinary Fascism* writer Turovskaia traveled to Germany and discussed *Ordinary Fascism* with students in Munich. Turovskaia mentioned that she viewed *Ordinary Fascism* as a film about all totalitarian regimes. East German professor, E. Kherlitsius, who was present at the meeting, wrote a denunciation letter to the East German leader Erich Honecker about their comments. He wrote that “the Soviet guests unanimously confessed, that they made this film also for their own conditions, and to criticize their own order, and the main thing is to understand the metaphor. The film is not a historical documentation; it is about an actual topic that is everywhere” (“советские гости единодушно признали, что они сделали этот фильм также для своих собственных условий и для критики собственных порядков, главное лишь в том,

This sort of focus, away from film spectacles and towards showing the events of history through real, everyday people, was characteristic of the 1960s. Prozhiko writes that people were the center of attention of documentary cinema of this era (*Kontsepsiia* 286). The tendency in these films was to try to understand the character of a person, often an artist, intellectual, or other creator, in all different facets and to try to reflect through this person both historical events as well as problems of the contemporary economic, political, and social aspects of life (Drobashenko 82). These stories were often told by the participants in the film (Drobashenko 73).

Different directors produced films that were close studies of the human character, including Igor' Beliaev, Marina Goldovskaia, Samarii Zelikin, Vladislav Vinogradov, Aranovich, Viktor Lisakovich, and Frank (Drobashenko 73). The diploma work of Aranovich, a director who will be discussed in greater depth later in this dissertation, was *The Last Boat* (*Poslednii parokhod*, 1964), a film about an old man who has to decide between his children, living in a faraway place, and his native city, where he had spent most of his life (Drobashenko 74). Lisakovich made films about a wide range of people, from the pilot Chkalov to completely unknown personalities, focusing not on the biography, but rather the internal world of the characters (Drobashenko 75). Frank and Al'bert Sazhin's *No Legends* (*Bez legend*, 1968) is described by Kovalov as “opposed to the ‘varnished’ portrait of a trailblazer of production, made

чтобы понять метафоры. Фильм не является исторической документацией, в нем идет речь о повсеместно актуальной теме”) (Kherlitsius 396).

as semiofficial propaganda, but a truthful story about his fate” (“Dokumental'noe” 535).⁴⁹ *No Legends* tells the story of Boris Kovalenko, who was tragically killed in an accident, through stories of others and a letter written by Boris. These sorts of film portraits greatly influenced the development of documentary cinema and close-ups of people began to dominate the screen (Drobashenko 76).

3.10 THE 1970S: A DIFFICULT ERA

Prozhiko describes the 1970s in documentary cinema as:

If you pay attention to the real history of documentary film from these decades, a picture opens up that is certainly difficult and contradictory, but absolutely not creatively barren. It is precisely from the depths of these years, which were difficult for all arts, in complex contradictions, that the sources of the contemporary were discovered, another system of artistic criteria, but most importantly--a crucial new relationship between the documentarian and society, which materializes in the key problem of documentary film: the documentarian and his material. And in this period the further development of the concept of

⁴⁹ “противопоставлялись ‘лакировочный’ портрет передовика производства, созданный официозной пропагандой, и правдивый рассказ о его судьбе.”

reality in the screen document occurs, giving rise to new methods of opening up living material and the human in the first place. (*Kontseptsiia* 328)⁵⁰

People remained the emphasis of 1970s documentary. Even historical works, such as films that focused on The Great Patriotic War, explored the human aspect of history and “the participant of this famous event, who carried the hard experience of war on his shoulders” (Prozhiko, *Kontseptsiia* 347).⁵¹ Films attempted to become less a model of the author’s thoughts and more of a dialog with the viewer, where the filmmaker made an effort to engage his or her audience (Prozhiko, *Kontseptsiia* 330). This allowed to viewers to connect with the film and for them to connect with events in the past, an important part of forming a new collective memory. Prozhiko describes three primary branches of documentary in the 1970s. The first was the most traditional and well-known form, films that painted a broad picture of the work of the Soviet people; the

⁵⁰“Если обратиться к реальной истории документального кино этих десятилетий, то откроется картина, безусловно, сложная, противоречивая, но творчески абсолютно не бесплодная. Именно в недрах этих трудных для всего искусства лет, в непростых противоречиях и формировались истоки современных открытий, иная система художественных критериев, но главное--принципиально новые отношения документалиста и общества, которые реализуются в ключевой проблеме кинодокументалистики: документалист и материал. И в этот период происходит дальнейшее развитие концепции реальности в экранном документе, порождая новые приемы освоения жизненного материала, и человеческого в первую очередь.”

⁵¹ “участника тех знаменательных событий, который на своих плечах вынес тяжелые военные испытания.”

second was an artistic exploration of the concrete facts of specific people's lives; the third branch featured films that explored trends of social development that involved the director's active intrusion into the films (Prozhiko, *Kontsepsiia* 335).

In the 1970s, filmmakers had to negotiate a desire to show reality with increasing ideological pressure on all creative intellectuals. Prozhiko describes this time period as

The general socio-psychological atmosphere formed its own official canon of documentary reflection of life on the screen, where the most important thing became the impression of never-ending labor holidays, smoothly sliding only forward, without conflict, trouble-free life and healthy people. The postcard-glossy jazz of the documentary screen hid the real diversity of life... (*Kontsepsiia* 328)⁵²

Virtually everything was supervised by Goskino. In 1972, Filipp Ermash was appointed as its director, a position he would hold until 1986. Goskino supervised exports under Sovexportfilm, co-productions under Sovinfilm, film festival organization under Sovinterfest, the journals *Iskusstvo kino* and *Sovetskii ekran*, VGIK, and the All-union Scientific Research Institution of Film Art (*Vsesoiuznyi nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut kinoiskusstva*, VNIIK), which was

⁵² “Общая социально-психологическая атмосфера сформировала свой официальный канон документального отражения жизни на экране, где главным стало впечатление бесконечного трудового праздника, гладкого бесконфликтного скольжения только вперед, благополучного бытия и самочувствия людей. Открыточная глянцева пестрота документального экрана скрыла истинное многоцветье жизни...”

founded in 1973 (Beumers 149). The entire filmmaking process was very carefully supervised. Filmmaker Petr Todorovskii recalls his experience:

Let's say I'm a script writer working at the Odessa film studios. I give a director a script. He gives it to an editor who can make corrections, then it's re-written and discussed by the editorial council of the studio. If they don't make corrections (and it was unusual that they didn't) then [it went] to the director of the studio, then to Goskino Ukraine where there's a special editor for the Odessa studio. If [there are] no corrections, then to the vice-minister, then to Moscow and to the all-Union Ministry where there's someone in charge of Ukraine... It was a harsh, very harsh system. (qtd Faraday 62-63)

While most films did not have the varnishing (*lakirovika*) characteristic of the 1950s, Prozhiko writes that

not a small number of films, initiated by the administrative authorities and executed with varying degrees of filmmaker's diligence, formed a grand, conventional image of reality, consisting of recognizable signs, both thematic and figuratively expressive... The screen reflection of reality was dominated by strictly selected moments of the lives of the heroes, organized mise-en-scène, carefully "edited" sound bites, bright color and a "domineering," detailed narration. (*Kontseptsiia* 350)⁵³

⁵³ “немало лент, инициированных административной властью и выполненных с разной степенью старательности кинематографистами, формировали парадный, состоящий из узнаваемых знаков, как тематических, так и образно-выразительных, условный имидж

Although documentary filmmakers sometimes wanted to explore more controversial topics, this led to conflicts with superiors, the banning and shelving of films, and even ruined careers (Prozhiko, *Kontseptsiia* 332).

3.11 CONCLUSION

The innovations and changes of perestroika documentary cinema did not come out of a vacuum. Documentary cinema had evolved from the very beginning of cinema itself, in terms of how best to use documentary for political purposes, what topics are appropriate, and how documentary should be filmed and edited. The genre, while certainly not monolithic, generally shifted from highly experimental to a more standardized canon of films that focused primarily on human subjects. During perestroika, films would largely continue this trend of focusing on the individual, but would shift to deeper examinations, more problematic topics, and an increased interest in the past, in addition to the contemporary difficulties of real life. These films integrated individual memories into the collective memory--the “active past which forms our identities”--(Olick and Robbins 111), and reexamined how groups understood their own past. Documentarians held important roles, from leaders at the forefront of cinematic innovation to

действительности.... В экранном отображении реальности преобладают строго отобранные моменты бытия героев, организованные на камеру мизансцены, тщательно «отредактированные» синхроны, яркий колорит и «повелевающий» подробный дикторский текст.”

war-time heroes, and would continue in this capacity during perestroika as harbingers of glasnost in cinema.

4.0 THE CONTEXT OF PERESTROIKA DOCUMENTARY CINEMA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Changes in how the past was remembered collectively and presented in the 1980s were closely connected with attempts to reform the Soviet economy and to plan for the future of the USSR. In order to avoid economic collapse, the Communist Party introduced the new policies of *uskorenie* (acceleration), *perestroika* (economic restructuring), and *glasnost* (openness).⁵⁴ These became the key words for the new policies of Mikhail Gorbachev, who was appointed General Secretary of the Communist Party on 11 March 1985, following the short tenures of Iurii Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko. These policies provided the cultural and political context that made possible the appearance of the films discussed in this dissertation. This first part of this chapter will provide a general overview of the era in cinema, primarily concentrating on how restructuring the administration paved the way for widespread change in cinema. The second part will demonstrate the increased importance of documentary during perestroika and will identify the common types of films that appeared.

⁵⁴ Since the 1980s, perestroika and glasnost have entered the English language as terms describing Gorbachev's reforms and I will use them without italics as English words.

4.2 THE FILM INDUSTRY

4.2.1 Political Context

When Gorbachev became General Secretary, he attempted to introduce economic changes through the policy of *uskorenie*, announced first at the April 1985 Central Committee Plenum and later at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress in March 1986 (White 18). *Uskorenie* entailed tapping “science and technology to lift Soviet economy out of its morass” and improving social discipline by state-wide campaigns of improving the work and leisure ethic of the Soviet population (H. Smith 178).

The Chernobyl nuclear power plant became a symbolic site associated with the almost instantaneous failure of this policy of speeding up a malfunctioning economy which, instead, needed major structural repair. Geoffrey Hosking notes:

This spirit [of acceleration] seems to have underlain the fateful experiment which took place on the night of 25/26 April 1986. It was conducted in order to discover whether energy output could be continued even when the station was receiving very low levels of electric current from its own turbines, for example during a repair or a temporary power failure. We do not know why it was judged necessary to test this, but of course maximum output in all circumstances has always been a motto of the Soviet economy, and Gorbachev had only recently made it clear at the 27th Party Congress that he was looking for *uskorenie* or “acceleration.” Is it merely my imagination, or has he used the word a lot less since Chernobyl? (*The Awakening* 57-58)

Safety precautions were overridden in order to conduct the test, and when the sudden increase in power occurred, nothing could prevent it from becoming an explosion (*The Awakening* 58). The Chernobyl disaster demonstrated that the Soviet Union's problems could not be solved by economic acceleration alone and that more profound changes to the overall system were needed.

These changes came in the form of perestroika and glasnost. Although these programs were, like *uskorenie*, outlined at the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, the words acquired specific meanings in the aftermath of the Chernobyl tragedy. After Chernobyl, the authorities redefined perestroika as reforms of the Soviet society as a whole rather than just the acceleration of an economy that supposedly suffered only from the lack of technological innovation and poor discipline. In 1987, Gorbachev published *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*, the major thesis of which was the critical need for systemic perestroika, defined as “an urgent necessity arising from the profound processes of development in our socialist society” (3). Gorbachev blamed the previous leadership for stagnation and a loss of momentum in the late 1970s (5). This problem was exacerbated, according to the new leader, by the “resistance to constructively scrutinize the problems that were emerging... Propaganda of success--real or imagined--was gaining the upper hand. Eulogizing and servility were encouraged; the needs and opinions of the ordinary working people, of the public at large, were ignored” (Gorbachev 7). As a means to achieve the economic ends, Gorbachev recognized the need for a more open line of communication, through glasnost, in order to save the Soviet economy.

As Horton and Brashinsky explain, glasnost is an ideological and cultural category, whereas perestroika is a practical one, encompassing the economic, political, and social spheres. They write “glasnost can produce truth, which was banned under the Communist regime for years, perestroika must produce butter and cheese for people, some of whom had gotten used to

the idea that these are not necessities” (128).⁵⁵ Glasnost came to signify two things. First, it was the authorities’ permission to discuss current social problems in the arts and media. Second, it marked the alliance between the reform-minded party *nomenklatura* and the liberal and cooperative intelligentsia in order to facilitate the production of these cultural texts.

4.2.2 Perestroika and Glasnost in the Cultural Sphere

Changes in the cultural administration as a result of perestroika and glasnost began early as the result of top-down policies. In August 1986 Minister of Culture Petr Demichev, who had been minister since 1974, was replaced by the more liberal Vasiliï Zakharov.⁵⁶ On 3 December 1986, Gorbachev invited members of the creative intelligentsia to a meeting, where he encouraged the liberalization of the arts. This liberalization came in many forms, from the model of *khozraschet* (self-financing), to new leadership in the various cultural unions, and the official publication and exhibition of previously banned works of literature and art, such as the appearance of the *Gulag Archipelago* in *Novyi Mir* and a July 1988 art auction that included Conceptualist and Sots Art paintings from the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps the culmination of these official liberalizations was the Law on the Press, which was approved by the Supreme Soviet in the summer of 1990. This

⁵⁵ They conclude that at the end of era, however, that “glasnost took over and left perestroika behind. Today one can speak openly in the Soviet Union, and that is what people do as they stand in line for meat or toilet paper.” (128)

⁵⁶ Zakharov was replaced by the actor and filmmaker Nikolai Gubenko in 1988.

law officially abolished censorship.⁵⁷ Brian McNair describes this event as “the most significant single event in the development of the Soviet media system since Lenin’s Press Decree of 1917. It defines the rights and responsibilities of journalists, establishes a new legal basis for relations between media organs and the state, and radically erases the restrictions which have existed on who can own and control media organs” (105).

Despite these major changes in the cultural administration, the authorities did not intend glasnost to become a Western-style freedom of the press and expression of Soviet citizens. Instead, they primarily wanted to slightly broaden what was considered appropriate subject matter. Cultural administrators allowed the return of the issues abandoned after the end of the Khrushchev Thaw. Revisiting the taboo topics and repressed narratives of the past constantly evoked issues of contemporary Soviet life and the return of previously banned acts of commemoration questioned not only their current place in collective memory, but rather problems of what should be remembered. Moreover, reevaluating the Stalinist and broader Soviet past raised the issue of the legitimacy of the Soviet system. The return of these texts and ideas triggered, in the words of Richard Stites,

an unprecedented freedom of expression--the cultural side of glasnost--and a legitimization by the authorities of spontaneously generated culture from below.... The new popular culture--much of it legalized “old” culture--contained strong currents of iconoclasm, demythologizing, and open irreverence. The

⁵⁷ There were three exceptions of where censorship was still considered appropriate: to protect state and military secrets, to prevent pornography, and to stop the promotion of ethnic conflict and war (Lawton 56).

ridicule of sacred icons that could previously be voiced only in underground anecdotes, paintings, and songs was now publicly heard. (178)

This new popular culture combined the evocation of repressed stories of the past with contemporary social issues. The renewal of Jewish emigration raised the question of freedom of travel and emigration; the discussion of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl--the origins and viability of state-run planned economy; and the return of previously banned books and films questioned the roots and future of ideological censorship in culture and media.

4.2.3 Perestroika and Glasnost in the Film Industry

The film industry was at the forefront of change in the culture industry. Filmmakers restructured their administration and worked towards decentralization, both in their power structure and in terms of what they presented on screen, giving new voices to the geographic and figurative peripheries of society, particularly in documentary cinema. George Faraday explains in his *Revolt of the Filmmakers* how the strict official control and monopoly of the film industry led them to embrace the changes of the perestroika era:

Filmmaking differed from broadcasting and news journalism in that the authorities tolerated the expression of a certain degree of heterodoxy; although nonconformists had a difficult time of it, they were not successfully excluded from entering the profession, and once admitted, were rarely ejected altogether. [...] As Condee and Padunov have pointed out, heterodox filmmakers were different from their counterparts in say literature or painting in that if they were dissatisfied with their treatment at the hands of the authorities, they had no choice but to stick it out within the state sector--at any rate, if they wished to continue to

make films. Denied the luxury of “internal migration” (i.e., withdrawal from officially sanctioned aspects of life) so common among other members of the late-Soviet intelligentsia, when given their chance by Gorbachev in May 1986, filmmakers came up fighting. (84-85)

These filmmakers worked to establish new rules and processes for making films through official means, beginning within their union.

4.2.4 The Role of the Filmmakers Union

The changes adopted by the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers Union, held 13-15 May 1986, exemplified the massive upheaval that the industry was experiencing. These new approaches to filmmaking were embraced enthusiastically at first. Critic Yuri Gladil'shchikov wrote of the “utopian fervor” that gripped the Fifth Congress, characterized by

A revolutionary romantic illusion: Life would become good very quickly and change instantaneously if moral and talented people took the helm, destroying the former nasty system. The union saw its task as freeing the cinema from the diktat of functionaries and from lying, removing film production from state control and introducing the market. Down with the State Cinematography Committee! Long live independent cinema! (qtd Faraday 125)

At the Fifth Congress the makeup of the Union’s leadership completely changed. For the first time, nominations were not prearranged, and the number of Secretaries increased from twenty to fifty-one, with the percentage of those who were Party members dropping from seventy-seven percent to forty-six (Lawton 53; 55). Elem Klimov was elected First Secretary of the Union, ousting Lev Kulidzhanov, who had been elected as First Secretary at the Union’s

founding in 1965 and had filled that position ever since. These decisions, however, were not unanimous and some expressed their objections to the changes. Nikita Mikhalkov, for example, was concerned about the “Jacobin spirit that moved a number of filmmakers eager to settle accounts” (Lawton 54). Mikhalkov and others who were not elected to the Union’s Secretariat formed an opposition front. Others were concerned that too much power was concentrated in too few people, as a number of the Union’s Secretaries also held positions of authority within studio production units, Goskino, or other organizations (Lawton 61). Their concern was somewhat mitigated by the fact that positions within the Filmmakers Union were now elected for five year terms instead of as lifelong appointments. The Union adopted several new practices, including polling membership on issues and periodic meetings between the Secretariat and members, which took place in the main auditorium of Dom Kino (Lawton 61). The purpose of these meetings, which began in December 1987, was to give rank and file members a chance both to ask questions of the leadership as well as to express their own opinions.

Initially, it seemed that the Union’s vision was both relatively united and close to that of Gorbachev’s, but as time went on the Union began to push for more radical reforms, and at the same time began to fragment along republican lines. Klimov took a leave of absence in January 1988 to return to filmmaking and was replaced by Andrei Smirnov. In 1988 decentralization of the Union continued with the decision for unions to operate more at the republic level. The Filmmakers Union of the Russian Republic was established in November 1988, approved in December 1989, and held its first Congress in February 1990, where Igor' Maslennikov was elected as the chairman and Sergei Solov'ev the co-chair (Beumers 187).

The “final” changes to the Soviet Filmmakers Union occurred at the Sixth Congress, held 5-7 June 1990. This meeting occurred earlier than originally planned because of the number of

important issues that needed to be discussed. Among these issues was the reorganization of the Union as a federation of independent republican unions. The governing body changed its name from “Secretariat” to “Council of Representatives”; it was made up of one representative from each union and from each of the country’s largest studios, Mosfil'm and Lenfil'm, plus a president and two vice presidents (Lawton 64-65). The top three leaders were elected by secret ballot. Klimov was replaced by Dovlat Khudonazarov, a deputy of the People’s Congress and a member of the Supreme Soviet (Lawton 65). Andrei Razumovskii and Mariia Zvereva were elected as the vice presidents. In addition to this organizational restructuring, the Sixth Congress by unanimous vote erased Socialist Realism as a requirement for all films (Lawton 93). Although many of the films of the 1980s already reflected a turn away from Socialist Realism, this was a symbolic act that served as a culminating point of an era of radical changes in the industry.

4.2.5 The Conflict Commission

Two days after the Fifth Congress, Klimov created one of the first projects of the Union’s new leadership: the Conflict Commission. The Commission consisted of critics, directors, script writers, actors, and representatives from Goskino and was led by film critic Andrei Plakhov. The Commission was established to review and release the films banned for ideological reasons during the Soviet period and was also tasked with deciding the fate of controversial new films.

Prior to perestroika, the process a film had to go through in order to make it to distribution was complicated. The script first had to pass through Glavlit, which was in charge of all printed materials. There were also sometimes checks conducted by the military, Ministry of Defense, and the KGB. When the film was in production, it was monitored by the studio’s

internal security, also called artistic councils and editorial boards. After completion, each film had to be cleared by the Repertory Control for release. Any film could be sent back for changes and if it was not acceptable, it was then shelved (Lawton 59).

Within one year, the Conflict Commission unshelved approximately one hundred films and discovered another 250 at Gosfilmofond that had never been released (Beumers 187). These films included features, documentaries, television movies, and animations. By the end of the decade, all of the previously censored films had been taken off the shelf (Lawton 57). Notable documentaries that were released included several works by Artavazd Peleshian, including *The Beginning* (*Nachalo*, 1967), a movie made for the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution, *We* (*My*, 1969), *The Seasons* (*Vremena goda*, 1975), and *Our Century* (*Nash vek*, 1982). His films had primarily been shelved because of “unconventional form, that raised doubts more than affirming beliefs” and not because of any particularly objectionable content (Lawton 124).

The Commission also dealt with conflicts related to contemporary films. During perestroika, films continued to be screened by the Repertory Control, but could appeal to the Conflict Commission if they were deemed unacceptable (Lawton 60). In the early days of its creation, the Commission primarily dealt with controversies involving documentaries. One such film was Arkadii Ruderman’s *Theater in the Time of Perestroika and Glasnost* (*Teatr vremen perestroiki i glasnosti*, 1988), made for Belarusfil’m, where there was a debate about whether the film matched the proposed script. The Commission decided that it should be screened and although Belarusfil’m did not approve of the decision, a rough cut was shown at festivals and on television (Lawton 58). The Commission’s activities demonstrate the shift in control of the content of films from the state to members of the film industry itself.

4.2.6 Goskino and Censorship

The reforms that took place at Goskino were among the most significant in the film industry at this time. Filipp Ermash had been the head of Goskino since 1972. Previously, Goskino had been in charge of practically everything in film production and distribution, giving it both financial and ideological control. Goskino was made up of several divisions, including the export and foreign distribution office (Sovexportfilm), the office of internal coproduction (Sovinfilm), film festival distribution (Sovinterfest), film archives (Gosfilmofond), VGIK (the traditional film school), and a new two year program (Higher Courses for Scriptwriters and Directors) (Horton and Brashinsky 21).

When Ermash was removed in 1986, it was without “official mention of appreciation, and [he] was publically blamed for the stagnation of cinema during his long years of service” (Lawton 55). He was replaced by Aleksandr Kamshalov, who was also a film specialist, with the expectation that he would maintain a relationship with the Filmmakers Union that would focus on collaboration rather than confrontation (Lawton 55).

Changes adopted at the Fifth Congress of the Filmmakers Union took away many of Goskino’s responsibilities. According to Klimov in February 1987, Goskino still had to work out the strategic projections of development for the industry as a whole, coordinate the production planning of the studios, process the orders for state-commissioned films, handle film printing and distribution, establish foreign relations, conduct export-import affairs, and guarantee the industry’s material and technical development. And finally, Goskino retains the right to decide whether a film, once completed, may be released... [But] in case of a dispute concerning a

specific film, a solution will be worked out jointly by Goskino's Collegium and the Secretariat of the Filmmakers Union. (qtd Lawton 55-56)

The new rules adopted by the Union increased filmmakers decision-making power, gave studios the right to plan yearly productions, decide on scripts and shooting schedules, move towards self-financing, and essentially eliminated censorship (Lawton 55).

Addressing censorship was a critical step in changing the way the past was understood. Censorship is a particularly strong way of affecting collective memory. Aleida Assmann describes censorship as a form of "active forgetting." While forgetting is a "necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations," active forgetting is an intentional and even violent act that disrupts how collective memory naturally functions in society (qtd Olick et al. 356). Attempting to reverse this act of violence not only opened the door to more open discussion of the past, but began the healing process from the cultural trauma of Stalinism. Films created a new master narrative of the past. They were allowed to grapple freely with the questions related to cultural trauma that Jeffrey Alexander, et al. find critical for this process (13). Early films addressed the specifics of the nature of the pain inflicted and who the victims of Stalinism were, while later films began to explore in more detail the attribution of responsibility.

While the removal of censorship was generally celebrated by filmmakers, it also had unintended consequences for the film industry. There was a sense that the professional level went down across the board when censorship was eliminated. Filmmaker Karen Shakhnazarov said "now it's clear there were good things in the censorship system. On the one hand you had political censorship, but you also had censorship of taste and now people without education can make films... and now it's clear that there are no times when artists don't have problems. In

America too, a director can't make any film he wants. That's the way the world goes. You could live with this censorship" (qtd Faraday 131). Documentarian Marina Goldovskaia explains the dilemma as it concerned documentary cinema in particular as:

Perestroika brought us documentary filmmakers a long-awaited freedom from censorship. On the one hand, that was good; on the other, not so good. We were used to a metaphoric method of talking to the audience, hiding the most important thoughts between the lines, speaking in hints and references. It was a language that got past the censors but was understood by the audience, who could tell what we meant. And then the need for that indirect language was gone. We could speak to the audience openly. Strangely enough, it was not always for the best. Some filmmakers moved too much toward journalism and lost artistic energy... For filmmakers of my generation, who had lived under totalitarianism, perestroika did not ease working conditions. I can't think of a single person whose greatest achievements were in the 1970s and 1980s and who adapted easily to the new situation. Why? Because our generation was not used to having to find funds or fight over financing; everyone who had been working had received state funding. (*Woman* 168)

Balancing the positive and negative consequences of a new level of creative control, with the changes in funding and censorship of films became a critical issue for perestroika-era cinema.

4.2.7 Introducing the New Model of Cinema

The Filmmakers Union made many changes to production and distribution in order to fit with Gorbachev's "New Model" for industry, which was built on the principles of freedom of

expression, managerial decentralization, self-financing economy, and the free market (Lawton 70). According to this policy, all production enterprises were supposed to be on a system of *khozraschet* (self-financing) by January 1988. Although this was an unrealistic goal for filmmakers, changes did occur and reforms were introduced gradually (Lawton 76).

The “new model of cinema,” according to Klimov, was aimed at transforming “the administrative model into a self-managing one” (qtd Faraday 127). The first step in this was to change the way budgets were allotted. Starting in 1988, each production unit of a studio was allocating funding, the amount of which depended on its proposed production plan. The production unit then had to make the proposed film and return the original sum of money at the end of the first year after release, keeping any extra profit. This policy was to continue until studios no longer needed to borrow money to begin making films (Lawton 78).

The issue of *khozraschet* is particularly controversial in terms of how documentary filmmakers were supposed to approach this new model. V. Savchuk, the main editor of films at the Sverdlovsk Documentary Film Studio, sums up the debates around this issue in 1988 in the article “Ekonomika--ne tol'ko ekonomiiia,” published in *Iskusstvo Kino*. He begins with explaining that the new model of cinema is being debated everywhere, from conferences to hotels, offices, film festivals, etc. (12). He then poses a question--the “question of questions”--that is indicative of the problems facing documentary during this time period: “how are we

supposed to unite the economy with art, connect strict, regimented production with free creativity, find the coveted ‘golden ratio’?” (15).⁵⁸

This issue of how the new model of cinema should work for documentary was debated by the Secretariat of the Filmmakers Union on 7 January 1988. Mikhail Litviankov made the case that documentaries worldwide were not self-financed, they existed because of the help of funds and grants (Kovalov, “Ianvar’ 7” 528). Some members of the Union believed that the problems of documentary and the new model of cinema were directly connected to more systemic problems in the documentary film industry. Boris Golovnia, for example, argued that there was not a working model for screening documentaries and, without that, any discussion about production reform was not possible (Kovalov, “Ianvar’ 7” 528). Others thought that finding a middle ground was possible. Valentin Tolstykh proposed a compromise that he referred to as a “model of models” (“*model' modeli*”), which was a version of the new model that was more specific to documentary (Kovalov, “Ianvar’ 7” 529).

These public debates about the viability of the new model for documentary cinema continued into the 1990s. In a 1990 interview for *Iskusstvo kino* Vladlen Kuzin, director of the Leningrad Studio of Documentary Films, discussed what he believed was a crisis in documentary cinema:

Documentary today faces the threat of an extremely serious crisis. For one thing, there is confusion about the new times. There is a creative and psychological

⁵⁸ “как нам все же подружить экономику и искусство, строгое, регламентированное производство соединить со свободным творчеством, нащупать заветное ‘золотое сечение’?”

crisis in all of Soviet cinema, and probably also in the whole social consciousness.

... [T]here is a crisis in administration and management that threatens our documentary with extinction. (qtd Horton and Brashinsky 155)

The crisis in administration that he refers to is self-financing. He argues that documentary cannot and should not be entirely self-financed (Popov 14). He is not against *khozraschet* in general, but is against the application of the model en masse (Popov 14). His main objection to documentary being a part of the new model is that nowhere else in the world is documentary not somehow connected with the video industry or television (Popov 12). His outlook on the future of the genre as a result of these financial changes is gloomy: “If we don’t unite the absolute independence of a studio as a business with optimally calculated and guaranteed subsidies from the state, documentary cinema, I’m afraid, will not survive” (Popov 16).⁵⁹

Not all felt that *khozraschet* was a bad thing for documentary. In a rebuttal to Kuzin’s interview, Igor’ Gelein said that he understands the fear that Kuzin felt when faced with *khozraschet* and independence (16). He argued, however, that any form of subsidy is a form of pressure on the artistic and creative process and that there should not be a monopoly on truth (15-16). Additionally, he wrote that Klimov said that decisions about the film industry should be made by the collective and the collective chose *khozraschet* (16).

Implementing the new model also involved major changes within film studios and the restructuring of creative associations (*tvorcheskie ob"edineniia*), which were first established in

⁵⁹ “Если мы не соединим абсолютную самостоятельность студии как фирмы с оптимально рассчитанной и гарантированной дотацией от государства, документальное кино, боюсь, не выживает”

the 1960s. These units were generally organized by theme, such as literary adaptations, children's films, etc. Each unit had its own workers, support staff and artistic personnel, with directors, actors, designers, cameramen, and others hired on a film-by-film basis, which was a major change from the previous system, where film personnel were paid year round, even between films. The number of production units within each studio ranged from two or three to more than ten. Mosfil'm had the most, eleven, and produced around fifty feature films per year (Lawton 72). These changes in the studio system happened so rapidly that "most filmmakers [were] unprepared to work under the new conditions" (Horton and Brashinsky 19). On the one hand, film industry workers liked being led by their peers; on the other, it was difficult to adjust to no longer being paid year round (Horton and Brashinsky 20).

4.2.8 Working Together--Domestic and International Cooperation

The perestroika era brought an increase in coproductions, both domestically and abroad, as a means of achieving self-financing. The Law on State Enterprises, passed in 1987, broke the monopoly of Sovexportfil'm. It gave the industry the right for studios to negotiate foreign deals directly, to purchase better quality film stock and equipment abroad, to market abroad and to do coproductions (Lawton 80). By 1988, almost a third of Soviet films were made as coproductions, mostly with Western partners (Faraday 137). The structural changes at Goskino and the dissolving of Sovinfilm in 1989 allowed for coproductions at the studio level. By 1990 cooperatives became a major factor in reshaping the film industry and were a necessary development in film production and distribution. The Association of Independent Cinema (*Assotsiatsiia nezavisimogo kino*, ANK) was established in May 1990. It included dozens of organizations nationwide, ranging from small cooperatives to large organizations headed by

major directors such as Sergei Solov'ev, Nikita Mikhalkov, and Vasili Pichul. ANK was designed to help members through many bureaucratic aspects of filmmaking, providing legal, social, and political protection, financing, and establishing relationships with foreign companies (Lawton 79). ANK was involved with thirty feature films in 1990 and sixty in 1991, plus hundreds of documentaries, educational films and animations (Lawton 79).

4.2.9 Problems with Distribution and Spectatorship

Film distribution became a major problem during the 1980s. On the one hand, cinemas were allowed to choose what films they wanted to screen, but on the other, relatively little was known about audience taste so there was no effective process of selecting these films. Several different organizations worked on the distribution of films for domestic and international audiences. Sovexportfil'm continued to work with foreign distributors and, as of the summer of 1989, they had worked with around three hundred film, television, and video companies in approximately 110 countries, selling roughly five hundred Soviet films abroad and importing 150 foreign films annually (Lawton 82). A new type of organization established during this time were the cine-video organization (KVO, *kino-video-ob"edinenie*). These were republican and regional associations that represented theaters in their districts. In order to decentralize distribution, Goskino established 154 KVOs (Lawton 84). As the video industry began to increase, legitimate state organizations found themselves in competition with a huge black market. Goskino's Videofil'm, the largest producer and distributor of videos, produced many different types of films, including documentaries, music, ballet, cartoons, among others, but primarily worked on distribution (Lawton 99). Videofil'm sought to expand the distribution system to reach more viewers through projects such as founding a new commercial TV channel, opening video-salons

where customers could rent or watch cassettes, and opening video trains in more remote parts of the Soviet Union, a project reminiscent of the agit-trains of the 1920s (Lawton 100).

Now tasked with trying to make profitable films, directors, studios and distributors had to figure out what film audiences would pay to see. It was challenging to make so-called “difficult” films, or art or experimental films that would make a profit (Lawton 93). Anna Lawton concludes that few new “masterpieces” came out during this time period as a result of the combination of conformism of thought and commercialism (Lawton 91). Mikhail Iampolskii wrote in 1988 that the “bulk of film productions attract neither those who appreciate art nor those who seek entertainment,” while Klimov contended that the problem was not that vulgar films attracted large audiences, but that the constant flow of boring films did not attract anyone (qtd Lawton 96). Public opinion began to play a larger role in the planning and distribution of films. Mosfil'm and the Moscow City Council's Film Distribution Bureau conducted a sociological poll to try to determine audience tastes (Lawton 90). Viewers were polled in magazines such as *Soviet Screen* (*Sovetskii ekran*). The results of these polls revealed the combination of entertainment and substance that attracted viewers. In 1988, *The Cold Summer of '53* (*Kholodnoe leto piat'desiat tret'ego*; Aleksandr Proshkin, 1988) won the audience poll. In 1989, the winner was *Intergirl* (*Interdevochka*; Petr Todorovskii, 1989), with *Solovki Power* (*Vlast' Solovetskaia*; Marina Goldovskaia, 1988) in second place, and in 1991 it was the documentary *This is No Way to Live* (*Tak zhit' nel'zia*; Stanislav Govorukhin, 1990).

The distribution and screening of documentaries was also affected. Despite the influx of important documentaries in the 1980s, only a fraction of them were seen by wider audiences. This was not because of political repression, but rather, as a reporter was quoted as saying “we are not talking about forbidden films, these films are actually recommended for public viewing...

simply there are no viable distribution systems” (qtd Lawton 139). As Annette Hill notes, “ultimately, documentary’s truth claim rests not on the image alone, but also on its reception” (82). While the changes on the production side of the genre are important, audience reception is another vital aspect of understanding how these films affect collective memory.

The primary venue for showing documentaries was television. By 1980, 89% of the population lived within range of television transmission and that figure rose to 93% by 1985 (Roberts 142). However, access to television did not ensure access to documentaries for a variety of reasons. Both Anna Lawton and Sergei Muratov reference the anecdote about the little girl who does not believe in God because she has not seen him on television and the same can be said of documentary; if documentaries are not shown on television, at a time when people might actually see them, they practically do not exist (Lawton 139; Muratov, “Neizvestnoe” 39). With few exceptions, such as *Higher Court* (*Vysshii sud*; Herz Frank, 1987), which was shown on Central State Television in November 1988, documentaries often were given undesirable time slots for screening on television (Roberts 146). Documentaries became a profitable venture for studios if the goal was to use them not for domestic television audiences, but for viewers abroad. Faraday explains that

The price offered for a single showing of a Russian movie on a European television station, for instance, could easily match its entire net return from domestic theater distribution. One result of this perverse structure of economic incentives was the concentration of many studios on documentary rather than feature film production, because of the greater ease with which the former could be sold to foreign television. (138)

The ties to television also affected the content and aesthetics of the documentaries made for television. Marina Goldovskaia, who worked on television documentaries for a long time, points out that television films were made on 16mm film, that they were black and white, and that they were seen on such a small screen that the quality of the film mattered less (“Stupeni avtorstva” 94). Television documentaries also tended to be more conservative in their content, as the television industry did not undergo the huge changes that the film industry did and was tied much more closely to the State (Horton and Brashinsky 133). These connections were both financial and ideological.

Although film documentaries had the opportunity to be much more open in their content, they typically reached even smaller audiences. Out of approximately one-hundred theaters in Moscow, only one was devoted to regular screenings of documentaries (Lawton 139). G. Kozlov points out in an article on documentary film festivals that documentary cinema was not popular in theaters (“Magistral” 56). Only a few films, such as *More Light (Bol'she sveta;* Marina Babak, 1988) and *This is No Way to Live*, received wider theatrical distribution.

Documentaries were featured in occasional film festivals. In the spring of 1988, the first all-union documentary film festival was held in Sverdlovsk, home of one of the most prominent and prolific documentary film studios in the Soviet Union. The festival featured programs of the various national cinemas (Kozlov, “Magistral” 52). *Higher Court* took home the main prize (Zorkaia 46). In July 1988 more than eighty documentaries were shown in a program organized by the Union of Filmmakers and Goskino at the theaters “Oktiabr” and “Rossiia”. The program’s name, “The Unknown Cinema: New Geography, New Protagonists, New Discoveries of the Past,” referred to the idea that documentaries had been neglected as a genre and shunned by past audiences for being too “boring.” The title also referred to several areas of “newness” in

documentary and feature films made in small studios in the provinces by young filmmakers and covering “the unknown past” (Lawton 138).

The problems specific to the distribution of documentary cinema were not ignored by the Union of Filmmakers. The issue was debated in journals, such as *Iskusstvo kino*. In a 1987 article in *Iskusstvo kino*, “Dokumental'no li dokumental'noe kino?,” a response from Klimov acknowledges that several articles

drawing attention to the nature of public resonance and the distribution fate of films, that examines the problems of restructuring the national economy, governance, and social consciousness, the Secretariat of the Union of Filmmakers of the USSR notes that the heads of a number of state and public organizations are trying to prevent the creation of films that reveal and analyze the negative phenomena in the development of our economy and society, to block their path to the screen. (38)⁶⁰

As a result of this, he resolves:

⁶⁰ “привлекающие внимание к характеру общественного резонанса и прокатной судьбе фильмов, осмысляющих проблем перестройки народного хозяйства, управления, и общественного сознания, секретариат правления союза кинематографистов СССР отмечает, что руководители ряда государственных и общественных организаций пытаются помешать созданию фильмов, раскрывающих и анализирующих негативные явления в развитии нашей экономики и общественной жизни, преградить им путь к экрану.”

To request that the chairman of Goskino USSR, Comrade A. I. Kamshalov, instruct the relevant departments of Goskino of the necessity of greater print runs and wider distribution of documentary films of high social relevance and actuality, which contribute to the implementation of the decisions of the XXVII Congress of the CPSU; [and] ask the chairman of Gosteleradio USSR, Comrade A. N. Aksenov for wide-scale screening on the First Channel of the All-Union Central Television, at a time convenient for a wide audience, of sharply publicistic films made by documentarians of cinema and television. (39)⁶¹

Despite the difficulty of actually distributing the films themselves to a wide audience, the act of making these films and the public discussion of them was still influential in changing the way people remembered the past. As Yerushalmi reminds us, collective memory is selective and what directors choose to preserve is important.

⁶¹“просить председателя Госкино СССР тов. Камшалова А. И. дать указание соответствующим подразделениям Госкино о необходимости широкого тиражирования и проката документальных фильмов высокой социальной активности и действенности, способствующих проведению в жизни решений XXVII съезда КПСС; [и] просить председателя Гостелерадио СССР тов. Аксенова А. Н. о широком показе по Первой всесоюзной программе Центрального телевидения в удобное для широких зрительских аудиторий время остропублицистических фильмов, созданных документалистами кино и телевидения.”

4.2.10 Documentary Film and Changing Technology

In addition to the structural and administrative changes in the film industry as a whole, documentary was fundamentally changed by a major technological development: the video camera. The video camera was even more lightweight and portable than the 16mm cameras that revolutionized documentary cinema in the 1950s. Portability is critical for a documentary filmmaker. Goldovskaia explains in her memoirs that

usually, the technology that documentary filmmakers use is more modest and simple than that in narrative cinema. The assortment of cameras, lenses, and accessories is, of course, endless, and if the budget permits, we can have anything we want. But in most cases, documentarians simply cannot lug all those luxuries around nor is there enough time or need to use them. The instant to be captured is fleeting. If we miss it, we can't do a retake. We can't prepare the shot or rehearse it. We can only guess, predict and capture it. So technology has to be special: Light, mobile, and reliable. (*Woman* 198)

In "Priroda videoizobrazheniia i neigrovoe kino" Gusev notes that a documentarian working with contemporary video technology has more possibilities to capture real snippets of life (95).

Video removed many of the obstacles to making documentary films that were associated with cost. Video cassettes were significantly cheaper than film stock and video cameras became inexpensive enough that it was feasible for filmmakers to own their own. Goldovskaia explains how her work in documentary changed after getting her own camera in 1989. She no longer had to depend on networks and producers for approval and could begin work on a project as soon as inspiration struck. She could also afford longer term projects without spending too much of her

own money (*Woman* 198). The invention of this technology was just one of the factors influencing the documentary boom of the 1980s.

4.3 DOCUMENTARY DURING PERESTROIKA

4.3.1 Why Documentary?

Despite problems with its distribution process, the documentary cinema boom was a critical part of the glasnost era, not only changing how society felt about the genre, but also how society related to its own past and present. Documentaries played an important role at a time when audiences demanded both “truth” and substance from films. In September 1988, the All-Union Scientific Research Institute of Film Art (*Vsesoiuznyi nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut kinoiskusstva*, VNIİK) conducted an audience poll at the first Festival of Popular Genre films. The results of this poll showed that audiences wanted more than just entertainment from cinema. The type of content they desired included: “honest discussion of historical facts relative to the Revolution and World War II, and revelations on the heroes of those years whose lives have been tragically destroyed” (55% of viewers). Fifty-one percent wanted movies about love, the family, people’s private lives. Forty-seven percent said they wanted to see films about contemporary social problems and topical issues of perestroika. As far as the style of these films, the number one desire from audiences was: “films rich in content, honest, based on life” (Lawton 99). Additionally, 56% of audiences polled thought that recent films played an “important role in the moral and political renaissance of the country” (Lawton 99).

Documentaries, particularly early in the era, were able to capitalize on this momentum. Liudmila Dzhulai in *Dokumental'nyi illiuzion* describes documentary cinema at the beginning of perestroika as:

Perestroika documentary can be called filmmaking of quick response. First of all, its news-reportage forms are activated, forms that seemed to be doomed to imminent extinction in the competition with more operational TV. However, concise, sharp, topical stories and essays, instilling the effect of a zone of free, independent words, fit in well with the atmosphere of a society politicized by reconstruction. Revived in contrast to the centralized [documentary], the regional newsreel found a foothold in the interests of its region or republic. (183)⁶²

Documentary cinema was significantly farther ahead than feature films in responding to the demands of the era. This was in part a logistical issue. Documentaries generally require shorter production time. There is less time spent planning, writing scripts, hiring and rehearsing with actors, etc. They are also generally less expensive to produce, not only because of smaller film

⁶² “Документалистику начала перестройки можно назвать кинематографом быстрого реагирования. Активизируются прежде всего его хроникально-репортажные формы, которые, казалось, были обречены на неминуемое отмирание в соперничестве с более оперативным телевидением. Однако лаконичные, острые, злободневные репортажи и очерки, нарабатывая эффект зоны свободного, независимого слова, хорошо вписались в атмосферу политизированного перестройкой общества. Возродился в отличие от центральных, нашел точку опоры в интересах своего края или республики региональный киножурнал.”

crews, but also because they often use less equipment for filming and there is often a sense that quality is less important than content.⁶³ Michael Brashinsky also describes a certain spirit that gives documentary an advantage over feature films: “documentary’s instant responsiveness to current social issues and problems; its investigative spirit and willingness to pursue themes long forbidden on Soviet screens; and the openness of documentary discourse, that is, the way in

⁶³ This “content versus quality” debate is one that is frequently invoked in discussions of perestroika-era documentary cinema. Dzhulai writes that “Even after taking a firm civic position, it is not easy for the documentarian to define an artistic strategy. It is no wonder that in the profession a this fierce debate broke out: what is more important for perestroika cinema--the theme itself or its implementation, what you shoot or how to shoot? Or put another way, does documentalism need creativity, art?” (“Даже сделав решительно свой гражданский выбор, документалисту бывает нелегко определить стратегию художественную. Недаром в профессиональной среде вспыхнула ожесточенная дискуссия: что важнее для перестроечного кинематографа--сама тема или ее воплощение, о чем снимаешь или как снимаешь? Или иначе--нуждается ли документализм в творчестве, в искусстве?”) (*Dokumental'nyi* 184). In their discussion of documentary films in general, some authors brush off artistic quality as unimportant. For example, Horton and Brashinsky say that “the cinematic qualities of the documentary naturally stepped back, subject matter came into the limelight” (129). Vladlen Kuzin opposes the idea that political action is more important than the artistic level, believing that a great, artistic film is beyond politics (Popov 11). Neia Zorkaia writes that documentary films actually have the same artistic objectives as artistic ones, but the primary difference is in the material (31).

which ‘the filmmakers share with us their questions and demand our participation in their search’” (qtd Horton 39). Actor and director Rolan Bykov said that “documentary film made such a jump ahead that it will take five to ten years for feature films to catch up” (qtd Lawton 139).

The rise of documentary films in the glasnost era required not only a change in the genre itself, but also a shift in audience perception of the genre. Horton and Brashinsky describe the change in documentary as a turn from an exclamation mark to a question mark (130). They describe previous Soviet documentary as following the model of Leni Riefenstahl, where expository films created myths that showed how rulers wanted everything to be and were “in the tradition of public lies” (129-130). Vladlen Kuzin discusses the major shift that happened in the 1980s: “If earlier, we either willingly or unwillingly identified our point of view with that of the ministry, party functionaries, etc., then now the most important thing has become the author’s dialog with a contradictory, frighteningly unfamiliar reality” (Popov 10).⁶⁴ He argues that films like *Is It Easy To Be Young?* (*Legko li byt' molodym?*; Juris Podnieks, 1986) shocked viewers and broke stereotypes about the perspective of the film. He writes that this film “rehabilitated the very understanding of ‘documentary cinema’” and that, as a result, “documentary was freed from its previous status” (Popov 10). Films like this not only allowed for greater freedom of expression for the director and the interviewees, but also acted as a dialog with the viewer. Galina Prozhiko writes in the article “V Rossiiu možhno tol'ko verit'?” that documentaries of

⁶⁴ “Если раньше мы вольно или невольно идентифицировали свою точку зрения с позицией министерства, партийных функционеров, и т. д., то теперь главным стал диалог автора с противоречивой пугающе незнакомой действительностью.”

that era presented different points of view and allowed viewers to draw their own conclusions (124).

These documentaries did not just inspire people to come up with their own perspectives; they often inspired viewers actually to act as a result of watching these films. One particularly powerful example of this is the 1988 Lithuanian film *The Brick Flag* (*Kirpichnyi flag*), a twenty-minute short by director Saulius Berzhinis. The film is about an 18-year-old Lithuanian recruit in the Soviet Army who was tortured and raped by fellow soldiers of other nationalities. After killing eight of them, he escaped, turned himself in to the authorities, and eventually went crazy. This film also included a long list of names of Lithuanians who had committed suicide while serving in the Soviet Army. As a result of this film protests were held in the Baltic States for military reform and the film played a role in Lithuania's decision to declare its independence (Horton and Brashinsky 127). When the film was screened at the First Documentary Film Festival in Leningrad in 1989, many signed a petition to Gorbachev in defense of the young man in the film (Horton and Brashinsky 128). After the release of *The Brick Flag*, viewers not only realized that documentary had the possibility to prompt action, but they began to expect concrete changes to resolve the problems discussed in films. At press conferences held at the Voronezh Film Festival, where several documentaries on ecological disasters were screened, Prozhiko describes scenes of directors being asked questions such as "What was the reaction to this film? Who saw it and what was the result?" ("V Rossiiu mozhno tol'ko verit'?" 132).

Perestroika documentary was also remarkable for its methodical approach to exploring the "blank" spots of history. This represents a shift from the 1960s and 1970s, the films of which tended to focus on contemporary topics. Film became an important medium for working through a difficult past. Lev Roshal' writes that he believes that the broader public relates to history

through the screen and not through other means, such as the written word (Kalgatina 23). Towards the beginning of the revival of documentary, in 1987, Muratov explains that the relationship between the past, as presented in the documentary, and the viewer:

Puts in front of us unforeseen issues and at the same time means a new understanding of old truths. We can say much more confidently than yesterday, what the subject of screen *publitsitika* is and whom the *publitsist* is addressing. His audience is not the viewer, but the public, and this is not quite the same thing. The screen appeals to public opinion in the name of public action. (“*Odinoki li my na zemle?*” 24)⁶⁵

Documentarians spent a significant amount of time in the archives, scouring newly released material.⁶⁶ In the introduction to the roundtable “*Istoriia na ekrane: dokument i mif*,” L. Kalgatina describes the process as:

⁶⁵ “ставит перед нами непредвиденные вопросы и в то же время означает новое понимание старых истин. Мы можем сказать куда более уверенно, чем вчера, что является предметом экранной публицистики и к кому обращается публицист. Его адресат - не зритель, но публика, а это не совсем одно и то же. Экран апеллирует к общественной мысли во имя общественных действий.”

⁶⁶ The films released from the archives were not only used in new documentaries, but sometimes became the topic of public discussion themselves. For example, a 1989 issue of *Sovetskii ekran*, a journal aimed at cinema audiences and not just scholars, contained an article called “*Khronika bez sobytiia*,” by A. Nenarokov and L. Ovrutskii. It was about a film that was released from the Krasnogorsk film archives, which depicted Stalin at the XIII Party Conference held in May 1924.

Recently, a large number of documentary films appeared in which the subject of analysis was history--real history, not retouched history. Today, when many of the repressed political leaders have been rehabilitated, when the doors to the “special archives” have been opened, previously unavailable archival documents, including film materials withdrawn from circulation, have obtained the right to citizenship. And the old film chronicles, as a rule, having performed the duties of a court chronicle of the totalitarian regime, began to speak a new language, literally opening our eyes to the past, taking profit from old tales, significantly supplementing and clarifying already known facts and materials. (23)⁶⁷

This particular film contained images of Trotskii, Zinovev, Kamenev, Krupskaiia, and Bukharin. The article also published excerpts of Bukharin’s speech. This was another way that documentary became a more publically visible genre and reintroduced previously censored memories and events during perestroika.

⁶⁷ “В последнее время появилось большое количество неигровых фильмов, предметом анализа которых стала история - реальная, а не заретушированная. Сегодня, когда реабилитированы многие из репрессированных политических деятелей, открылись двери в ‘спецхран,’ недоступные ранее архивные документы, в том числе изъятые из обращения киноматериалы, получили права гражданства. И старая кинохроника, как правило, исполнявшая обязанности придворной хроники тоталитарного режима, заговорила новым языком, в буквальном смысле слова открывая нам глаза на прошлое, извлекая из старых сказок быль, существенно дополняя и уточняя уже известные факты и материалы.”

These films do more than just reexamine the past--they create a new mythology, a new memory, a new view of the past from a very different perspective. In the 1989 article “Not for the Fanfare: Pages from the Biographies of Soviet Armymen,” which discusses several recent historical films about Marshal Blucher, Marshal Konev, and Marshal Rokossovskii, Galina Kopalina describes the changes in the approach to the past as

The present and the past are linked together today in non-feature films, which have broken away from the long-standing tradition of presenting life as one long holiday, a series of triumphs, or addressing themselves to non-existent problems.... As the film archives are thrown open, the unknown and forgotten news-reels enable us to take a fresh look at those times through the prism of today’s new thinking. (16)

In examining the past, documentarians take into account contemporary viewers’ “baggage”--their experiences and their previous knowledge, making them a sort of co-author of the research (Ognev 113).⁶⁸ Aleksandr Sherel' explains that the feeling of “I saw this with my own eyes!”

⁶⁸ Not all saw this creation of a new mythology as a positive goal for documentary cinema. Vladimir Kobrin points out in the roundtable discussion “Dokument i mif” that the danger of myth happens when someone takes the myth as truth and the actions of people are determined by the myth and not by reality (Kalgatina 25). Kuzin sees this new mythology as even more dangerous, as one semi-truth being replaced by another (qtd Horton and Brashinsky 155). He writes that “destroying the old mythological system, they began to build in its place a new one, largely canonizing, unfortunately, what was just found” (“Разрушив старую мифологическую систему, они стали возводить на ее месте новую, во многим канонизируя, к сожалению,

was a common reaction to films about the past (10). Viewers connected that which they saw in the film to their own autobiographical memory. This exploration of the past is more than just thinking about history. Galina Prozhiko writes that “Documentaries more frequently tend to historical reflection, not only in the broad historical canvas, but also in the space of examining the present” (*Kontsepsiia* 373).⁶⁹ Anna Lawton further qualifies this by saying that

By looking back at the past, the documentarists try to explain the present. The common question, central to most films is: what was the cause of the present collapse of our economy, the loss of spiritual values, the lack of moral principles and civic pride, and what are the prospects for our youth in a society that has lost clear direction? These questions cannot be easily answered, but at least they set the ground for an honest evaluation of the current situation. (141)

These documentaries establish a strong connection between the previously unknown past and its effects on contemporary society.

только что найденное”) and quotes Irina Shilova as saying, about perestroika-era documentary, “Living in a new situation, we reproduce old stereotypes” (qtd Popov 10). He says that the new mythological structure is not any closer to reality than the previous one; it is simply that the old motifs of happy children and works have been replaced by the new motifs of Afghanistan vets, invalids, pensioners, prostitutes, etc. He concludes that it is easier to create a new mythology than it is to teach someone to think (Popov 11).

⁶⁹ “Кинодокументалистика все более тяготеет к историческому мышлению не только в широких исторических полотнах, но и в пространстве исследования современности.”

4.3.2 Documentary Cinema as the Unknown Cinema

In 1988, at the height of the documentary boom, *Iskusstvo kino* published Sergei Muratov's article "Neizvestnoe kino," which perhaps best describes the spirit of the genre. He writes that the future of documentary had been potentially very dark, but that two years prior to the writing of the article, the situation changed with the release of *Is it Easy To Be Young?* It was followed by films such as *Higher Court*, *The Wood Goblin (Leshii)*; Boris Kustov, 1987), *The Dam (Plotina)*; Vladimir Kuznetsov, 1986), *And the Past Seems But a Dream... (A proshloe kazhetsia snom...)*; Sergei Miroshnichenko, 1987) among others, and Muratov believes that not a single one of these films could have appeared any earlier ("Neizvestnoe" 22). Perestroika was an ideal combination of circumstances for the resurgence of the genre and a new approach to its understanding.

Muratov explains what documentary, which he refers to as "the unknown cinema," "is" at this point in time. Most important for this dissertation is that documentary is "a new look at old situations" ("Neizvestnoe" 23). It reexamines the past from a fresh, contemporary perspective that has been influenced by the changing political context. In other words, it reinterprets the past, creating new memory of it. This new way of looking at the past often involves the literal recycling of old footage. For Muratov, the unknown cinema is the demythologization of newsreels. It forces us to be appalled at that, to which viewers had long been accustomed (25). Many films, including several discussed in this dissertation, use old newsreels and Muratov asks how audiences are supposed to understand them today? Are they supposed to laugh? Or mourn? To be embarrassed? ("Neizvestnoe" 26). He further explains that

The newsreel is an image of time, according to supporters of movie periodicals. It is a document of a period, according to which future generations will judge how

people lived before them. But then, today we ourselves are “future generations.” What will we learn about past life from the frames of yesterday’s newsreel? What is it willing to share with us? [...] So what does old newsreel footage contain--the image of the time or the myth of the time? How would this time like to see itself? (Muratov, “Neizvestnoe” 26)⁷⁰

Consequently, this unknown cinema is also a new “opening” of the past (“Neizvestnoe” 28). He explains that this is not only in terms of revelations about the facts of history, but also of previously unknown social characters. He describes it as a continuation of the exploration of the human character as a subject that first began in Soviet documentary cinema approximately twenty-five years earlier (“Neizvestnoe” 30). He writes that documentary “is” new “actors.” Previously, documentarians picked “Heroes,” with a capital H, for their films, but now there are different heroes (“Neizvestnoe” 24). They are everyday people, often without extraordinary characteristics. He describes documentary film as stepping into the era of multivoicedness, an idea that is very important for the films examined in this dissertation. In films, multiple people present their sometimes contradictory perspectives on a given subject. The unknown cinema is film from the first person perspective (“Neizvestnoe” 33). Muratov writes that for a long time,

⁷⁰ “Хроника - это образ времени, утверждают сторонники кино периодики. Документ эпохи, по которому грядущие поколения смогут судить, как жили люди до них. Но что ж, сегодня мы и сами ‘грядущие поколения.’ Что узнаем мы о прошлой жизни из кадров вчерашней хроники? О чем она готова нам рассказать? [...] Так что же несут в себе кадры старой хроники - образ времени или миф о времени? Каким оно, это время, хотело бы видеть само себе?”

viewers believed that “the authenticity of the screen is not compatible with the author’s subjectivity. The authenticity is measured by the degree of personal communion,” (“Neizvestnoe” 33)⁷¹ but that now “at times authors do not maintain their stated principle of non-intervention” (“Neizvestnoe” 36)⁷² and that the unknown cinema is “depicted by the direct invasion of the activity” (“Neizvestnoe” 36)⁷³. The unknown cinema makes us look at life through the eyes of its heroes (“Neizvestnoe” 38).

The unknown cinema is not merely a spectacle on screen. It is a detonator of social thought (“детонатор общественной мысли”) and is a new form of social thinking (“Neizvestnoe” 37-38). In its best films, the unknown cinema “gives us back sight, sound, and voice. This is about the public vision, public hearing, and the public voice” (“Neizvestnoe” 38).⁷⁴ Muratov writes that:

The documentary screen affects the audience, not only with what it shows, but also what it does not show. That is why whenever the broadcast of a publicistic work is cancelled, it.. elicits such a public outcry, unforeseen by television

⁷¹ “экранная достоверность несовместима с авторской субъективностью. Достоверность измеряется степенью личного сопричастия”

⁷² “случается, авторы и сами не выдерживают заявленного ими принципа невмешательства”

⁷³ “и прямое вторжение в изображаемую деятельность”

⁷⁴ “возвращает нам зрение, слух и голос. Речь идет об общественном зрении, общественном слухе, и общественном голосе”

workers. Every publicly withdrawn film about the struggle against bureaucracy is a victory of bureaucracy in the perception of the viewer. (“Neizvestnoe” 39)⁷⁵

Muratov’s article characterizes both the subject matter of perestroika-era documentary and the way the material is presented, a change that captured the attention of domestic and international audiences.

4.3.3 Perestroika Documentary Abroad

The documentaries of the 1980s not only were influential in the Soviet Union, but abroad as well. The world was introduced to the “Unknown Soviet Cinema” of this era for the first time at the Krakow International Festival of Short Films in the spring of 1986 (Kopalina, “Ekologiya npravstvennosti” 97). Western Europe and America also slowly took notice of the new direction of Soviet documentary. In 1988, “as sign of respect for the changes in” the Soviet Union, Marina Goldovskaia was invited to head the jury of the documentary film festival in Cannes (*Woman* 164). In 1989, a collection of documentaries was screened in the United States as part of the Glasnost Film Festival, sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art (Horton 39). This series featured twenty-two Soviet documentary films made or released in 1987 and 1988. The films were shown in the United States and circulated around college campuses as part of a program

⁷⁵ “ документальный экран воздействует на аудиторию не только тем, что показывает, но и тем чего не показывает. Вот почему каждый случай отмены в эфире публицистического произведения... вызывает такой непредвиденный, для телесотрудников общественный резонанс. Каждый публично отозванный фильм о борьбе с бюрократией в восприятии зрителя означает победу бюрократизма.”

sponsored by the Citizen Exchange Council in cooperation with the American-Soviet Film Initiative (ASK-Moscow) (Youngblood 107). In recalling how these films were selected, Leonid Gourevich wrote “I remember preparing and selecting the films for the ‘Glasnost’ festival in the United States in 1989. The Americans wanted to see a program of films that were socially and politically critical” (20). The *New York Times* praised the series for the insight it gave into the Soviet Union, saying “American viewers can now have their first broad-gauged view of the brave new world of Soviet documentary cinema and the work of the artists who took Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s policy of openness most seriously” (Barringer). Horton describes the scene after the screening of Igor' Beliaev's *The Trial (Protsess, 1988)*, a film that discusses the 1930s trials during the Great Terror and includes moving footage of Bukharin's wife, as: “The film had an amazing effect... The night it was shown, it was like the last installment of ‘Dallas.’ Everybody was watching. There was hardly any traffic moving on the street” (qtd D. Smith). This event was followed by a series of American documentaries that was shown in the Soviet Union, as well as a joint US-USSR seminar held in Riga in September 1990 dedicated to Flaherty and Vertov, where forty-five Soviet and forty-five US documentarians spent a week screening and discussing each other's films (Barnouw 343-344).

4.3.4 *Is It Easy to Be Young?*

The Latvian documentary *Is It Easy To Be Young?* took the Soviet Union by storm with its candid content. Non-narrative in the traditional sense, *Is It Easy To Be Young?* is a film in the participatory mode. It follows several young adults through a variety of different problems they face, giving voice to the youth and various subcultures. Andrew Horton calls it “something of an anthology of troubled youth documentaries, for it addresses the topics of rock culture, drug

abuse, alienation and the problems of returning Afghanistan war veterans” (41). Muratov more succinctly sums it up as a film about the loneliness of an entire generation (“Odinoki li my na zemle?” 29).

Director Juris Podnieks graduated from VGIK and worked with documentarian Herz Frank. Podnieks started work on *Is It Easy To Be Young?* somewhat accidentally. He had set out to work on another film, but found out about a rock concert and decided to film it. It was only later that he heard about the destruction that occurred that night and used the footage of the crowd to find people who had been there to use in the film (Iashchenko 35).

In January 1987, the theater Rossiia in Moscow began screening the only print of *Is It Easy To Be Young?*, which became the first movie in the history of documentary film to have a “kilometer long line” (Sudakov and Iasakov 323). The film, which received both rave reviews as well as a lot of criticism, served as “a prototype for many films to follow” and was seen as evidence that glasnost was “for real,” especially by audiences abroad (Lawton 175). Podnieks’ mentor Frank said of the film when it came out that:

This film was able to do something that had not yet succeeded in documentary film; it gathered young people in cinemas, for a collective spectacle. It galvanized public opinion, openly and directly said what previously had been said with shame, in the corners, or held back completely. For that reason the film had such massive success with the audience, especially the young, that it filled a void,

born of an absence of truth, a lack of documentary films of high emotional intensity. (qtd Mchedlidze 170)⁷⁶

This film, it turned out, was the beginning of a much larger movement within the genre.

4.3.5 Characteristics of Perestroika-era Documentary Films

Is It Easy to Be Young? opened a floodgate of documentaries that never could have been made and released in earlier times. The most common feature of documentary cinema was its willingness to discuss so-called “taboo topics.” Elena Stishova writes that “the real achievement of our cinema is the inclusion of new material that was taboo, banned for many years” (“Ekran vremen” 7).⁷⁷ Many of the films of this period were “shocking in themes--historical and contemporary--that they touched,” but at the same time, were also largely conventional in terms of cinematic language (Beumers 189). These films were overwhelmingly dark, standing in stark contrast with the *lakirovka* of previous eras. Liliana Mal'kova compares the *chernukha* of perestroika to the “rose-colored *lakirovka*.” She writes that previously, any inefficiencies were

⁷⁶ “этот фильм сумел сделать то, что до сих пор не удавалось документальному кино-- собрать молодежь в кинотеатры, на коллективное зрелище. Он всколыхнул общественное сознание, прямо и открыто сказал то, о чем говорилось стыдливо, по углам, или умалчивалось вовсе. Фильм потому и имел столь массовый успех у зрителя, особенно молодого, что заполнил собою пустоту, рожденную дефицитом правды, дефицитом документальных лент высокого эмоционального накала.”

⁷⁷ “Реальное завоевание нашего кино - обладание новым материалом, который был табуирован, запрещен в течение многих лет.”

fixed by “heroes of our days,” but in contemporary films, the subjects are the outcasts of society (149).

In terms of the topics common in perestroika-era documentaries, Dzhulai came up with a “thematic dictionary” that, in addition to topics regarding the past, included:

Alcoholism, “Afghanistan syndrome,” mismanagement, global environmental deterioration, “hazing,” lumpenization, marginality, drug addiction, poverty, crime, tyranny, repression, prostitution, environmental disasters, ethnographic problems. (“Kogda strana...” 29-30)⁷⁸

These themes, of course, are not mutually exclusive and several films fell into multiple categories.

An interest in the past was another reoccurring feature of films of this time period. Prozhiko writes that

The years of restructuring our society constitute such a sharp break of the consciousness of the nation that they reveal a particularly keen and demanding interest of audiences in the past of our people. Specifically it is the difference in understanding and assessing the historical path, of certain events and of historical figures, in many respects demonstrates truthful--rather than the proclaimed--

⁷⁸ “Алкоголизм, ‘Афганский синдром,’ бесхозяйственность, геораспад, ‘дедовщина,’ люмпенизация, маргинальность, наркомания, обнищание, преступность, произвол, репрессии, проституция, экологические катаклизмы, этнографические проблемы.”

position with respect to the restructuring of various groups in society.
(*Kontsepsiia* 382)⁷⁹

Horton and Brashinsky describe the attack on Stalin's cult of personality as the "battle cry" of the early era of glasnost. They quote Padma Desai as saying "there can't be more perestroika in culture and history without lifting the oppressive burden of Stalinism from Soviet life" (qtd Horton and Brashinsky 24). Horton and Brashinsky concluded that "the first five years of glasnost suggest that de-Stalinization and a reconsideration of the past have indeed been priorities in the arts as well as in politics" (24). People's memory of the past needed to be reassessed. While later chapters of this dissertation focus on films about the Stalin era, the return to history was not just about Stalinism. Lawton explains the process of reexamining history as something that got out of hand: at first, historical films and other works presented Stalin as a demonic figure, then blame was eventually shifted to people who accepted the injustices of the system, and then finally there was a questioning of Marxism-Leninism itself (141).

Documentaries took different approaches to examining the past. Many used archival footage to draw new conclusions. Shmidt mentions in the roundtable "Dokument i mif" that, when the viewer sees the actual archival footage of Lenin with Stalin, Zinov'ev, Bukharin, and

⁷⁹ "Годы перестройки нашего общества, столь резко переломившие самосознание нации, выявили особо пристальный и требовательный интерес людей к прошлому своего народа. Именно различие в понимании и оценке пройденного исторического пути, тех или иных событий и исторических личностей во многом определяет истинные, а не декларированные позиции по отношению к перестройке различных групп общества."

Kamenev all on screen together, it is difficult to imagine that they were enemies from the start (Kalgatina 32). One particularly interesting use of archival footage was in *Chronicle of a Parade* (*Khronika demonstratsii*, 1989). The film was made by a group of young directors from Leningrad, led by Dmitrii Zhelkovskii. They took newsreels of Revolution Day parades and reedited them into a new film, without adding any new materials, a perfect example of Muratov's description of documentary recycling old footage. Horton and Brashinsky describe the result as "a scary joke" and "an absurdist comedy and today causes nervous laughter in the rows of Soviet viewers who might have recognized themselves on film" (130).

Different types of traumatic events from the Stalin era, both personal and cultural, were examined in documentary. They addressed events from forced resettlements (*And the Past Seems but a Dream...*) to nuclear research and the difficulties facing Soviet physicists (*Risk: Dmitrii Barshevskii*, 1988). Several films looked at disgraced military leaders, primarily from the Stalin era. Some of the first films that addressed the repressions of 1937-1939 were *The Story of Marshal Konev* (*Povest' o Marshale Koneve*; Lev Danilov, 1988) and *Marshal Rokossovskii: Life and Time* (*Marshal Rokossovskii: Zhizn' i vremia*; Boris Golovnia, 1988). Vladimir Eisner's *Marshal Blucher* (1988) tells the story of the decorated veteran who participated in the 1937 court martial that led to the death sentences of many of the best army commanders and then was killed himself. The film focuses less on the career of Blucher and more on the question of why a man with such integrity participated in these trials. Lawton notes that this film is, in fact, not even just about Blucher himself, but brings up the question of "why did everybody else, the average citizen, participate in a collective delusion" (143). Later films, such as *Revolution Square* (*Ploshchad' Revoliutsii*; Aleksandr Ivankin, 1989), explore problematic events during Lenin's time. *Revolution Square* restores the name of Filip Mironov,

a Civil War commander who was one of the first to be slandered and executed by communists following the war, using sequences from the Vertov film *Trial of Mironov* (*Protsess Mironova*, 1919).

Some films addressed the more recent past, such as *Black Square* (*Chernyi kvadrat*; Iosif Pasternak, 1988). Although the title refers to the 1915 Kazimir Malevich painting, the film is about the underground painters of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, specifically mentioning the incident with Khrushchev and the avant-garde artists at the Manege Hall exhibit in 1963 and the exhibit in Izmailovskii Park in 1976 that was demolished by bulldozers. The film, like many others of the era, uses archival footage of these events to retell from a new perspective the story that was originally captured in the images.

The war in Afghanistan was the subject of many documentaries of the late Soviet era. These films painted a very different picture of war veterans, as compared to films about the Great Patriotic War. These films often were often in the participatory mode and spoke from the first person, built around the voices of those involved in the war, telling their open and honest thoughts about their experiences. *Homecoming* (*Vozvrashchenie*; Tat'iana Chubakova, 1987) features stories of the Afghanistan war, as told by the soldiers themselves, revealing the physical and emotional devastation of the conflict. *Pain* (*Bol'*; S. Luk'ianchikov, 1988), written by Ales' Adamovich, shares the testimony not only of soldiers, but also of the mothers and widows of those who never returned, and of priests who performed funerals for killed soldiers. These two films include powerful statements from veterans, such as "I have no idea why I've been there" (*Pain*), "Nobody asked my generation whether we should have this war or not" (*Homecoming*), and, perhaps the most telling of the need for this type of film, "No one needs us... I've never seen them show the truth about us" (*Homecoming*). The film *Demobilization* (*DMB-91*; Aleksei

Khaniutin, 1991) presents a more in-depth look at the whole experience for a soldier, not just the aftermath of war. It follows a group of young men through the entire process, from kissing their families goodbye, through hazing rituals and humiliation, to becoming the ones administering the hazing, and ending with the suicide of one of these men.

Ecological problems were the focus of many films in the 1980s, reflecting a shift in the understanding of accountability for such issues. Lawton explains that previously there had been the belief that only capitalist societies caused ecological problems, but this was slowly being exposed as a lie during glasnost (168). Horton and Brashinsky note that as a result of the top-down system of management under the Soviet Union, authorities cared primarily about production and fulfilling the plan, not about environmental consequences (149). Perestroika gave more power to local authorities and residents began to take more of an active role in protecting the environment around them. Some of the earliest glasnost era documentaries were about ecological problems that were a result of man's attempts at controlling nature, such as *Scenes at a Fountain* (*Stseny u fontana*; Igor' Gonopolskii, 1986), a film about a six-hundred foot fire at a natural gas well near the Caspian Sea which burned for over a year, or *The Dam* (1986) a short made at the Sverdlovsk studio by V. Kuznetsov that was seen by a small number of people upon its original release, but became popular in academic circles the following year (Kozlov, "S nimi..." 25). This topic remained popular throughout the era, with films such as Dmitrii Delov's *Against the Current* (*Protiv techeniia*, 1988), about the organization of a protest movement against a synthetic-protein plant, Romuald Pipars' *Hour of Democracy* (*Chas demokratii*, 1988), which showed protests against the erection of a dam, and Boris Shun'kov's *Flooding Zone* (*Zona zatopleniia*, 1989) which shows burning and abandoned houses in the area of a man-made flood caused by the Saiano-Shushenskaia hydroelectric power plant. Not surprisingly, the

ecological disaster that was a large part of the glasnost movement was also the subject of several, often controversial, documentaries. *Chernobyl: Chronicle of Difficult Weeks (Chernobyl: Khronika trudnykh nedel'*; Vladimir Shevchenko, 1986) was the first, and most well-known, feature-length documentary on the subject. It primarily focused on showing the actual, physical damage of the disaster, and not on the long-term consequences. The film crew worked continuously for three months following the explosion. The filmmaker died of radiation poisoning and the camera used for shooting was so contaminated that it had to be buried (Lawton 168). The film was temporarily banned and was not released until after the director's death in 1988 (Horton and Brashinsky 150).

Contemporary social issues were another major focus of documentaries. Prozhiko explains the connection between the number of ecological films and sociological ones as:

The movement from the problems of ecology of nature to the *ecology of society and people* in the development of documentary during perestroika is quite natural. The new era brought to the screen a number of painful issues long hidden in society. These include drug abuse, and prostitution, and crime, and abandoned children and old men. The painfulness of these issues is so intense, that most often films do not seek to interject their shout or their pain into an analysis of the life processes that provoke these troubles. The relevance of the topic here at times is the main advantage of the film presentations (*Kontsepsiia* 363).⁸⁰

⁸⁰ “Движение от проблематики экологии природы к *экологии общества* и человека в развитии кинодокументалистики перестроечных лент вполне закономерно. Новое время вывело на документальный экран множество болезненных вопросов, долго скрываемых в

Neia Zorkaia chooses two films that she believes are examples of the era (30). The first, *Confession: Chronicle of Alienation* (*Ispoved': Khronikha otchuzhdeniia*; Georgii Gavrilo, 1988) is the story of a drug addict, Lesha, his girlfriend Sveta, who dies of an overdose, and their baby Vera. Lesha is an educated, well-mannered eighteen-year-old from an upper-middle class family who “chose to escape from an artificial social milieu... into a world of artificial dreams” (Lawton 176). The second, *Higher Court*, follows a twenty-four year-old murderer through his arrest, investigation, trial, time on death row, and execution. Frank gives voice to the convicted criminal, who speaks candidly in interviews with the filmmaker. The film presents him as an ordinary person and forces the viewer to think about the consequence of the death penalty. The film won the main prize at the first All-Union Documentary Film Festival in Sverdlovsk and won the main prize and viewers' prize at the International Film Festival in Nyon, Switzerland in 1988 (Zorkaia 46). Both films include the social outcast speaking in the first person, representative of the shift that occurs in perestroika-era documentary. People share their own memory and perspective, instead of the state telling an official version of contemporary or historical events.

Youth problems were the topic of numerous documentaries. Many focused on violent happenings, such as the Estonian documentary *A Life Without...* (*Zhizn' bez...*; Mark Soosaar, 1987), which explores the complex nature of teenage suicide, including both the causes and the

обществе. Здесь и наркомания, и проституция, и преступность, и брошенные дети, и оставленные старики. Болезненность самой проблематики столь чувствительна, что чаще всего фильмы и не стремятся свой крик, свою боль погружать в анализе жизненных процессов, провоцирующих эти беды. Актуальность темы здесь порой составляет главное достоинство киновыступления.”

aftermath, and *And What About You Guys?* (*A u vas vo dvore?*; V. Kuz'mina, 1987) delves into the world of male street gangs in Kazan, where the crime rate by teenagers is the highest in the country (Horton and Brashinsky 84). It deals with what drives people to join these groups and focuses not only on the gangs, but also a group of young vigilantes who form their own sort of gang to try to protect the city. Films that examine “youth problems” focus on more than just brutal events precipitated by the youth. *Are you Going to the Ball?* (*Vy poedete na bal?*; Nadezhda Khvorova, 1987) looks at the training of young girls hoping to become gymnasts and how their parents, the state, and their teachers pursue athletic success at the expense of the children’s well-being. Khvorova interviews women who once trained intensely, some successfully and some who did not become stars, and uses this material as the basis for her film.

Films also explored women’s issues. *The Limit* (*Granitsa*; Tat’iana Skabard, 1988) showed the effects of alcoholism on women, which was unusual because the problem was typically associated with men. *Tomorrow is a Holiday* (*Zavtra prazdnik*; Sergei Bukovskii, 1987), portrays the dehumanizing world of industrial labor and its effect on women, drawing comparisons between the conditions of the chickens at the poultry factory where the women work with the living situation of the women themselves. *Our Mother is a Hero* (*Nasha mama--geroi*; Nikolai Obukhovich, 1989) is about a woman who is seen as an exemplary worker. It was originally filmed in 1979 and was released only during perestroika (Dzulhai, *Dokumental'nyi illiuzion* 194). Although she is a hero in the workplace, she is a poor mother and wife. Horton and Brashinsky describe her as a hero of “Brezhnev reality,” not of perestroika (152).

Perestroika brought marginalized groups to the forefront and many films explored the sense of hopelessness that these people felt. *Kond* (Artiun Khachatrian, 1987) shows the inescapability of life in a slum-like neighborhood of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

Khachatrian juxtaposes interviews with the inhabitants with important lifecycle images, such as births, weddings, and funerals, to give the sense of being trapped for the entirety of one's life. Other films capture the disappointment of those who once sought the promise of a better life. *The Limit or the Fourth Dream (Limita ili chetvertyi son*: Evgeniia Golovnia, 1988) is about those who come to Moscow in search of improving their circumstances, but find themselves as a segregated minority, faced with poverty, discrimination, and disillusionment. *The BAM Zone: Permanent Residents (Zona BAM, postoiannye zhiteli*; Mikhail Pavlov, 1987) portrays the disruption of the lives of workers who built the Baikal-Amur Mainline and were still living in temporary barracks ten years after its completion.

Another topic not discussed publically before that became the subject of films was AIDS. *The Risk Group (Gruppa riska*; A. Nikishin, 1987) was commissioned by Videofil'm and was meant to inform the public about the dangers of AIDS and who was at risk for it. While it was supported with statistics, it also included some very emotional testimony, such as a letter from a group of medical students who say they will deny medical care to all drug addicts, prostitutes, and homosexuals (Lawton 170).

Lawton calls Stanislav Govorukhin's *This is No Way to Live* the "climax of present social ills" film (171). It compares the collapsed moral and material situation in the Soviet Union to that in America and in Germany, and presents the image of Russia in "terms of 'what we have' and 'what we could have,'" blaming politicians for this gap (Beumers 205). The first public screening was in May 1990 and it was then shown to representatives of the People's Congress of the USSR, delegates to the Congress of the Russian Republic, and members of the Moscow City Council (Lawton 174). It was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, and opened at the theater Rossiia in Moscow in July. The film was hailed by both the public and the press. Nikolai

Travik, a hero of Socialist Labor, who was interviewed for *Sovetskii ekran* in 1990 called the film “very, very much needed” (“*Ochen', ochen' nuzhnaia*”) (Andreev 12).

Not all documentaries had to do with the social problems of the era. Another area where the marginalized came to the screen was in documentaries about rock and other “youth” genres of music. *Rock (Rok; Aleksei Uchitel', 1987)* discusses the origins of the new musical wave that included the musicians Iurii Shevchuk (from *DDT*), Boris Grebenshchikov (from *Aquarium*) and Viktor Tsoi (from *Kino*), and uses interviews from these stars as the basis for the film.

Director Aleksandr Sokurov, who worked at the Leningrad Documentary Film Studio, released several documentaries during perestroika. The film that had the most interesting fate was *Mariia*, which was first made in the 1970s, about a collective farmer. The film was initially seen as too pessimistic and was banned (Horton and Brashinsky 152). During the 1980s, upon returning to the village and discovering that this woman had committed suicide, Sokurov made chapter two of this film. Both parts were released in 1988. His 1987 *The Evening Sacrifice (Vecherniaia zhertva)* shows a Victory Day celebration as a “senseless herd of people” (Horton and Brashinsky 153). Other Sokurov documentaries released in this time period include *The Allies (I nechego bol'she, rel. 1987)*, *Elegy (Elegiia, rel. 1987)*, *Alto Sonata (Al'tovaia sonata, 1987)*, and *Soviet Elegy (Sovetskaia elegiia, 1990)*.

Glasnost did not mean complete freedom for all documentaries and there were still several controversial films that were either banned or held in limbo for some time before being released. Belorussian director Arkadii Ruderman ran into trouble with several of his films. The film *Theater in the Times of Perestroika and Glasnost (Teatr vremen perestroiki i glasnosti, 1987)* was the first film to call the State and Party the enemies of perestroika (Horton and Brashinsky 147). It was banned in Belarus. *The Meeting Campaign (Vstrechnyi isk, 1988)* was

based on the trial of Ales' Adamovich and was also about the “enemies” of perestroika (Lawton 57). Although the film won first prize at the Leningrad Documentary Film Festival in 1989, it had been held in bureaucratic limbo for a long time before its release.

4.3.6 Documentary in Crisis

By the end of the 1980s, the effects of glasnost were spiraling out of control and the Soviet Union was heading into crisis. Documentary, too, was in a difficult position for a variety of reasons. First, the issues of funding and distribution still had not been resolved. In the article “Pochemu dokumental'noe kino prinadlezhit narodu,” Muratov says that not only is it difficult to find places that screen documentaries, but it is difficult even to find out information about the films to create any interest in potential audiences (89). He insists that neither the Union of Filmmakers nor Goskino have a strategy for dealing with documentary, and without this nothing will change (90).

It was also becoming more difficult to continue to engage audiences. Nina Mchedlidze writes that the boundaries of glasnost “were expanding so rapidly that film *publitsitika* was not able to give fresh food to the hearts and minds of contemporary viewers” (169).⁸¹ Horton and Brashinsky explain that this is even more so for films about the past:

By late 1990 and early 1991, however, reconsideration of the socialist past had disappeared almost entirely from Soviet screens. Audiences voted for escapist entertainment with their tickets. Those filmmakers who did continue to evoke the

⁸¹ “расширяются столь быстро, что кинопублицистика про не в состоянии дать свежую пищу уму и сердцу современника.”

past, particularly the Stalinist heritage, risked pushing the historical discourse beyond absurdity into incoherence, or past familiarity into the valley of clichés.

(51)

Finally, there was also a sense among filmmakers that there was no thrill in making documentaries anymore. Goldovskaia writes that

Nowadays, I miss the feeling that the films I am making are important for society and can make a difference. My old friends, documentary filmmakers, joke, “We are completely independent--nothing depends on us anymore.” Back then it was different. When I was making films in the 1980s, I knew I was doing something that could end very badly for me.... There was a constant sense of risk. But at the same time, it gave me an intoxicating, addictive high that came from knowing that my film was needed, that it was helping society move forward. (*Woman* 102)

Though the documentary boom was short-lived, it played an important role in helping people think about their own past and come to terms with the cultural trauma of the Stalin era, and had lasting effects on Soviet collective memory.

5.0 THE SYSTEM CAN BE SAVED

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses two films, Marina Babak's ... *More Light!* (... *Bol'she sveta!*, 1987) and Marina Goldovskaia's *Solovki Power* (*Vlast' Solovetskaia*, 1988), that use newly released archival material as a means for exploring the past. Although both films criticize certain aspects of the past, they promote the idea that the system can be saved, showing Leninist ideals as the path to redeeming the Soviet Union. Each film takes a different approach to presenting Stalin-era trauma and each is met with drastically different levels of success in terms of making a lasting impression on the public and affecting how they relate to the past. While ... *More Light!* tells the history of the Soviet Union in the expository mode of documentary, *Solovki Power*, in the participatory mode, gives voice to individuals, and presents a more nuanced understanding of the past, especially as it resulted in cultural trauma.

Both films take a similar point of departure: Esfir' Shub's *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*, 1927). *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* was one of the first films to commemorate the anniversary of the October Revolution, a use of cinema that became a tradition in the Soviet Union. In general, documentaries on historical subjects are acts of commemoration these films are specifically made for the purpose of keeping the past an active part of forming identity, which is an important part of collective memory. Like Shub, Babak and Goldovskaia

compile rare archival footage to create new meaning in the film. In *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, Shub uses scenes from newsreels and “careful juxtaposition culled from an enormous amount of original film footage... [to offer] a critique of the tsarist regime in terms of the new Communist social and political categories” (Corney 185).

Babak and Shub use their footage to highlight a central message. While other revolutionary films of the 1920s also portrayed the lack of connection between the rulers and the ruled, for Shub’s *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*

the entire structure... illustrated this gulf--lengthy shots of the closed castes of educated society were juxtaposed to sequences of the equally closed castes of the oppressed masses. Against newsreel footage of ornately costumed military officers and nobles from Russia, Germany, Austria and England marching in seemingly endless parades, she contrasted footage of plainly dressed workers and peasants engaged in various forms of manual labor. (Corney 185)

Similarly, Babak structures her film around using archival footage to illustrate one, overarching theme: a return to Leninism is the solution for the contemporary Soviet Union. Both films, although completed as jubilee films, are less about celebrating the achievements of the Soviet Union and more about fixing the mistakes of the past. Using memory to emphasize what should not be repeated from the past.

Shub and Babak cull their footage from a wide variety of sources. Goldovskaia takes the majority of her material for compilation from one film: A.A. Cherkasov’s *Solovki (Solovetskie lageria osobovogo naznacheniiia, 1928)*. It was commissioned by the Communist Party and secret police to show the world that the Solovki prison was an exemplary reeducation institution, where class enemies acquired a new socialist consciousness. *Solovki* was a response to the book

An Island Hell, written by S. A. Malsagoff, a former prisoner in Solovki, who managed to escape to England. His book was published in 1926, telling the world of the horrors in this secret Soviet prison. The western press attacked the Soviet regime for what it was doing to its citizens, and the documentary *Solovki* was supposed to disprove these charges. Although the film was primarily made for foreign audiences, it was first shown to workers within the Soviet Union to demonstrate how criminals were retrained to be model Soviet citizens. Not surprisingly, workers interpreted the film differently from how the government expected. They were upset that the film's criminals lived better than they did. Moreover, they complained that "free and loyal Soviet citizens suffer, we have no place to live and nothing to eat.... while these criminals in prisons and camps are well fed, and given housing and work" (qtd Goldovskaya, *Woman* 143-144). The film caused unrest during its screenings in the Soviet Union and the authorities decided to shelve it. The film never reached its intended international viewers.

Fall of the Romanov Dynasty, ...More Light! and *Solovki Power* all use cheerful images of the past to reveal an underlying sinister nature. Babak's narrator, for example, says "The 1930s were a difficult, harsh, ambiguous time," immediately before the film cuts to upbeat music and newsreel intertitles about the successes of Soviet workers and factories, highlighting the difference between the cheery images and reality. Goldovskaia's film tells the story of Aleksandr Prokhorov, an engineer who worked on the Moscow metro and was arrested following a trip he was sent on to study, juxtaposed with headlines and archival footage of the triumphant opening of the metro. Shub used these newly demonized images to celebrate the toppling of the previous regime. Babak and Goldovskaia, however, focus on the mistakes that were made in the past, but in a system that can and should be saved.

5.2 ... *MORE LIGHT!* IN THE CONTEXT OF PERESTROIKA DOCUMENTARY

...*More Light!* is an early example of a film that reexamined the past in the context of the present. This film is in some ways very radical, particularly in the content of footage it uses, but in many others is quite conservative, both in its form and content. This film, with its voiceover narrative and clear progression, is made in the expository mode. Babak acts as both “reporter,” at times seeming to return to an almost Vertovian praise of the achievements of the Lenin era, and “chronicler,” creating a compilation film to tell her story. ... *More Light!*, made in honor of the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution, is a look back at the Soviet Union’s history, beginning with Lenin and the Revolution, and cycles through history in ten-year increments. Unlike many previous jubilee films, it focuses on many of the mistakes that were made and the names that had been erased from history, but ends on an optimistic note as it looks towards the future. It remembers the past both out of fear of deviating from it and fear of repeating it. This film is characteristic of perestroika-era documentary according to Muratov in that it presents a new perspective on the past and works to demythologize old newsreels. Although it features “everyday” Soviet people, it focuses more on discussing the stories, both positive and negative, of the so-called “Heroes” (with a capital H) of the past.

As the first perestroika-era documentary jubilee film, ...*More Light!*’s release was highly anticipated. A segment of the script, covering the beginning through 22 June 1941, was published in the November 1987 issue of *Iskusstvo kino*. The film was not without controversy in its production, particularly since the liberalization of the filmmaking process was still in its earliest stages. The first time the Central Documentary Studio internally screened the film, it was not permitted release. Babak describes the meeting as “the majority of the employees simply did not attend the screening, many left without waiting for the finale. It was obvious that

they did not feel like participating in the discussion of the film, did not feel like having their statements and names figuring in the record” (qtd Kovalov, “Noiabr' 9” 371).⁸² Babak then turned to Viktor Afanas'ev, the head editor at *Pravda* and speechwriter for Mikhail Gorbachev. Afanas'ev endorsed the film and gave it to Kamshalov to show Egor Ligachev, a high ranking official in the Communist Party and head of the Central Committee’s ideology department Babak says that

At that time Afanas'ev was writing a speech for Gorbachev to deliver on 7 November and, seeing the film, was amazed at how accurately the formulation and the meaning of our film coincided with that which was going to be in the General Secretary’s speech. The film delighted him, and he said that the film certainly needed to be released, but only after Gorbachev gave his speech. (qtd Kovalov, “Noiabr' 9” 371)⁸³

When Ligachev met with Babak and Igor' Itsov, who co-wrote the script for the film, on 9 November 1987 it was the first time that documentary directors were invited to the Central Committee (Kovalov, “Noiabr' 9” 370). When the film was released, it received “star billing”

⁸² “Большинство сотрудников студии просто не пошли на просмотр, многие ушли, не дожидаясь финала. Очевидно, им не хотелось участвовать в обсуждении фильма, не хотелось, чтобы их высказывания и фамилии фигурировали в протоколе.”

⁸³ “Афанасьев в это время писал доклад Горбачева к 7 ноября и, увидев картину, был поражен тем, как точно совпали формулировки, мысли нашего фильма с теми, которые должны были войти в выступление генсека. Фильм привел его в восторг, он сказал, что картину обязательно надо выпускать, но только после того, как выступит Горбачев.”

and much wider distribution than the typical documentary film (Lawton 141). Despite the hype, the film's release was disappointing. Although it was screened at the Rossiia theater, the release was limited and its premiere on Central Television was in the middle of the afternoon, a window that reached few viewers (Kovalov, "Noiabr' 9" 371). The film was denied entry to the Leipzig International Film Festival, although it was shown in at the Berlin Film Festival in February 1988 (Kovalov, "Noiabr' 9" 371; Savel'ev 547).

5.3 RE-PRESENTING THE PAST: CONTENT AND AESTHETICS OF ... *MORE*

LIGHT!

In ...*More Light!* Babak subtly shifts the focus of perestroika-era collective memory by repeatedly taking familiar documentary tropes and subtly changing them to encourage viewers to interact with and reconsider the history they thought they knew, and to use their new knowledge to support the current path of the Soviet Union. This act of engaging with history helps keep it an active past that continues to help form identity and collective memory. Babak explores the official dichotomy of "Lenin was good, Stalin was bad" by using a combination of "typical" newsreel images and archival footage, newly released in the name of glasnost, consistently invoking Lenin to condemn what was "bad" and to praise Gorbachev's reforms.

This film conforms with and justifies Gorbachev's goals for the Soviet Union. Lawton describes ...*More Light!* as a survey of Soviet history, in accordance with Gorbachev's vision: it reaffirms Lenin, denounces Stalin and Brezhnev, rehabilitates Bukharin, praises Khrushchev's honesty, and attempts to fill in the blanks of history with facts (140). The film explicitly aligns itself with this last, promising in the opening frame of the film "a public and open conversation

about the past” (“*glasnyi i otkrovennyi razgovor o proshlom*”). This use of the word *glasnyi* immediately makes the viewer recall the ideas of glasnost.

The film is, at first glance, highly conventional in structure. It not only goes back to the tradition of a compilation documentary, but also has a male narrator providing the voiceover. Although this film lacks the multiple perspectives of different interviewees that were seen as a triumph of perestroika-era films, the narrator in this film is still quite different from the traditional voiceover narrator of Soviet documentary, who previously acted as an anonymous voice of the state. Her choice of narrator, Mikhail Ul'ianov, is of twofold importance. First, Ul'ianov was a friend of Gorbachev and played a role in the Party Conference as a vocal supporter of reform, making him the perfect figure for narrating a film that aligns with Gorbachev's goals for the Soviet Union (Lawton 140). Second, Ul'ianov was a figure already well-known to Soviet audiences for his role as Marshal Georgii Zhukov⁸⁴ in films such as Iuri Ozerov's *Liberation* (*Osvobozhdenie*, 1970-71) and *Battle for Moscow* (*Bitva za Moskvu*, 1985), Mikhail Ershov's *The Blockade* (*Blokada*, 1974-1977), and others. Unlike the typical documentary narrator, Ul'ianov actually appears on screen and directly addresses and relates to the audience. In the opening sequence of the film, he begins with a commentary about how “everyone is sick of the silence. We are going to try to talk about the past with more honesty, more light.” The camera then cuts to Ul'ianov himself. This gives a face to the narrator and places him in real time. Although he is male, he is no longer the anonymous, omniscient, authoritative voice. This begins what is meant to be an open discussion with the viewer. Ul'ianov appears on screen several times throughout the film, each time questioning assumptions

⁸⁴ The fact that Ul'ianov played Zhukov is notable, as he was known for his defiance of Stalin.

of history. In an appearance in the Stalin-era segment of the film, for example, he asks why only parts of the story were usually shown, wondering why the state “took us for fools,” reminiscing with the audience that “we” lived through that time, “we” remember, and “we” know a lot. By using the word “we,” the narrator positions himself as a member of Soviet society and as someone who relates to the typical viewer.

The disassociation of the voice of the film from the voice of the state is present not only in the role of the narrator. The film opens with the intertitle:

... The pages of history that this film discusses evoke arguments, different assessments. We do not pretend to know the absolute truth, but we are certain that a public and open conversation about the past and present is necessary...
[signed] the authors of the film”⁸⁵

The inclusion of this statement, and particularly the signature of the authors is meant to tell viewers that, although the message of the film is closely aligned with the state perspective, this voice in the film is neither that of the government, nor does it pretend to be omniscient.

The way that the film takes on this task of “a public and open conversation about the past and the present” is by adding new material to fill in the blanks of what people knew. It is important to note that this film is not a mere commemoration of the Revolution and exploration of the past, it is about applying the lessons of the past to the present day. To illustrate these points, it builds on a long-established dichotomy between Lenin and Stalin. Lenin was good,

⁸⁵ “... Страницы истории, о которых пойдет речь в этой картине, вызывают споры, различные оценки. Мы не претендуем на знание абсолютной истины, но убеждены: гласный и откровенный разговор о прошлом и настоящем необходим... авторы фильма.”

human, and on the right path. Stalin was bad, tried to be superhuman, and did a great deal to harm the development of the Soviet Union. Compared to the amount of time that Lenin spent in power, the film dedicates a significant portion of its total length to building his legacy; a full twenty-four minutes out of an approximately ninety minute film. The first shot, after the opening intertitle, is an unusual portrait of Lenin, painted by Kuz'ma Petrov-Vodkin in 1934, on the cover of *Ogonek* magazine. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: *Ogonek* cover with Lenin's portrait

As Ul'ianov looks at the image, he discusses the portrait and how many people think that Lenin looks too sad and too lost in thought. This sets up several threads that run through the film. By showing Lenin as the first image of the film, it establishes him as the focal point, even though his years in power make up a relatively small percentage of the Soviet Union's seventy year history. This particular image humanizes Lenin. He is portrayed as having real, human emotions. He is not a great, monumental power in this painting, which contrasts him with Stalin's cult of personality and Brezhnev's delusions of grandeur. Finally, this particularly sad image of Lenin foreshadows his implied disappointment with the path the Soviet Union took following his death.

Lenin, and the programs that were started under Lenin, are the prism through which the past is interpreted. This is the history that is remembered out of fear of deviating from it. Babak refers back to Lenin's opinions of certain members of the government, particularly those who later fell out of favor under Stalin. This first happens in the explanation of the group photograph of the first Soviet government, which is referred to as "the most intellectual government in Europe." The narrator goes through each individual member of the group, discussing the problems they had with the previous regime, how many times they had been arrested, and what their current role is in the government in 1917-1918. This scene includes individuals whose images had not been seen by ordinary Soviet citizens in years and had virtually been erased from the people's memory. It shows, in the following order, Lenin, Aleksei Rykov, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko, Nikolai Krylenko, Viktor Nogin, Anatolii Lunacharskii, Lev Trotskii, Stalin, Nikolai Bukharin, Aleksandra Kollontai, Grigorii Zinov'ev, and Iakov Sverdlov. With the exception of Stalin and Kollontai, not a single member of this government remained alive by the end of the Great Purge. The narrator then concludes that it is hard to believe that any of these people could be called an "Enemy of the People" by Lenin. If Lenin felt that Bukharin and Trotskii were worthy members of the government, then something must have gone wrong when they were ousted.

Even after Lenin's death in the film, he returns to offer his advice because, as the narrator notes, "Lenin is always with us." In the discussion of the power struggle following Lenin's death, the narrator describes how Lenin wrote down some of his political ideas, including that Bukharin was, despite his faults, a good person, Trotskii was "the most competent person," and that Stalin was not fit for leadership. "I am not certain that he will be careful enough in using his

power,” said Lenin of Stalin. Using this particular quote distances Lenin from Stalin, using Lenin’s own words.

Over a slow zoom in on the same opening portrait of Lenin, the narrator expresses concerns about the future because of the fact that nearly everyone who worked with Lenin disappeared and that there was a move away from “Leninist norms” in both the Party and the country in general. This, the film claims, is the overarching problem that plagues the Soviet Union to the present day. The film constantly looks to the past for insight on how to fix the present. The narrator frequently relates Leninist ideals to the situation in perestroika-era Soviet Union. For example, in its discussion of the positive effects of the New Economic Policy, the narrator says “of course, it would be naïve today to copy the methods of the 1920s,” but that we can still take lessons from NEP and that “these lessons are in earnest and for the long term.” Lenin is used to justify Gorbachev’s 1980s policies. The narrator notes that “someone and something” stopped the Soviet people from doing what was best and most logical. But now the people are learning again in the “school of truth, glasnost and democracy” and the recent Twenty-Seventh Party Congress resulted in a turnaround and new decisions. This revelation is followed by a return to the image and words of Lenin, indicating his approval.

By contrast, Stalin is a negative influence on the development of the Soviet Union, with the narrator frequently bringing Lenin back in as a point of comparison. The Stalinist past is remembered so that it is not repeated. In the discussion of the mass repressions of the late 1930s, Stalin is shown standing on a boat with Voroshilov, Iagoda, and Kirov in the Belomor Canal, itself a reference to the explosion of the Gulag under Stalin. The narrator notes that the people of the 1930s just believed in him and saw him as the heir of Lenin. But, the narrator continues, out of everyone who actually worked with Lenin, there remained only Stalin. Through Stalin’s

repression, particularly of his internal opposition, “the history of the Party and the history of the Revolution were already rewritten.”

Stalin becomes larger than life, a stark contrast to the human size of Lenin. His name appears on a train and is written in this sky. His face appears on parade banners, as sculptures, and in countless other images. The narrator notes that “even today, unfortunately, there are people who forget what [the cult of personality] was like, what it cost the country, the party and the people.” He reminds them that the cult of personality “is our memory of pain, of arrests and executions.” He talks about the midnight knocks on the door, the endless lines and prisons, specifically mentioning Kolyma, the most notorious and deadly area of the Gulag, and that many of those imprisoned there were actually faithful followers of the Party of Lenin. This massive repression cost innocent Soviet lives, not only for those who were arrested unjustly, but also as a result of the mass execution of the upper echelons of the military shortly before the onset of the Great Patriotic War, an event that the film discusses at length.

It is not just Stalin himself who is subject to scrutiny through the eyes of Lenin; it is also those who were given power by Stalin. Trofim Lysenko, whose theories on agriculture were the only permissible scientific method under Stalin, is among those who are criticized. Lysenko, shown giving a speech under a portrait of Stalin, thus connecting the two visually, is condemned by the narrator for forgetting about the Leninist ideals of open and honest discussion of science. To argue with Lysenko, the narrator claims, was “deadly dangerous.”

If Lenin could be used to cast his disapproval in the film, then he could also be used to show approval, as was the case with the introduction of Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev is presented as a courageous figure for his condemnation of the cult of personality in his speech at the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956. Even more important than his break with the

politics of Stalin, as the narrator explains, was that this indicated that the Party was decidedly returning to Lenin.

To support this particular interpretation of history, Babak uses a mixture of familiar and rare images of the past. The film was hailed for its inclusion of newly released archival footage, but what is particularly notable is that Babak often sets these previously banned or taboo images in a very familiar context. Images of workers' faculties were commonplace, for example, but Babak specifically includes in her discussion of the cultural revolution in the 1920s a clip of the Bukharin Workers' Faculty (*Rabochii fakul'tet imeni N. I. Bukharina*), subtly integrating the once forbidden name into the narrative. Similarly, an advertisement for the Bolshoi Dramaticheskii Teatr features another victim of Stalinism, Vsevolod Meierhol'd, and his production of Gogol's *The Inspector General*.

Sergei Muratov notes the importance of a new hero with a lowercase "H." Babak focuses on everyday people, but largely creates one homogenous hero: the (anonymous) "Soviet People." After the opening scene that introduces Ul'ianov, the reoccurring portrait of Lenin, and the film's title, Babak cuts to a black and white image of faceless masses, the second hero of this film. The narrator explains early in the film that they have selected many examples of subjects from the past seventy years of film chronicles: "different ones, major ones, minor ones." This is illustrated in the discussion of the 1930s, where Ul'ianov explains the various people included: "we gathered them together, the people of the 1930s. Both normal, and rare, and those who are celebrated as great all over the world." He introduces several by name, such as the scientists Ivan Pavlov, K. E. Tsiolkovskii, and I. Vavilov. The film then cuts to a series of images of unknown people, described by the narrator as "the people of the 1930s. The people of the field and the factory." Although their images appear on screen, indicating the importance of the

people, they do not get to tell their own stories and are therefore not given a real voice in the film.

5.4 THE HISTORY OF SOLOVKI POWER

In her 1988 film *Solovki Power*, Goldovskaia introduces memory of the Gulag into perestroika culture, which helps rewrite the canonical history of the Soviet past. While *...More Light!* represents an early attempt at distancing the voice of the author from the voice of the state while still maintaining official ideology, *Solovki Power* represents the next step--creating a multivoiced narrative that openly and emotionally deals with the past while subtly reinforcing the traditional “Lenin good, Stalin bad” and “the system should be saved” ideology. Goldovskaia uses distinct voices to tell the story of the Gulag, creating a community of separate individuals, as opposed to the perspective from homogenous, anonymous Soviet people. Goldovskaia uses Solovki as a metaphor for a systemic critique of the Soviet Union. These people and events, together with the intelligentsia, provide an alternative to the Soviet Union as shaped by Stalin. Goldovskaia’s film, like Babak’s, contrasts this Stalinist system to Leninist revolutionary idealism.

Solovki Power is an account of the Solovki prison camp, one of the first camps in the Gulag system, founded in 1923 on the Solovki Islands.⁸⁶ The film reveals the story of the

⁸⁶ Anne Applebaum refers to the Solovki camp as “the first Soviet camp to be planned and built with any expectation of permanence” (20). She points out that other camps did exist at the time, but that this camp was “the OGPU’s [*Ob”edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie / The All-Union State Political Administration*] prison” and the place where they “first learned to

Solovki camp through interviews with survivors juxtaposed with excerpts from a 1928 propaganda film about the camp, Cherkasov's *Solovki*. *Solovki Power* is a prime example of the participatory mode of documentary, where the filmmaker interviews the participants, often intercutting archival footage, and is cited by Nichols as an illustrative example of this mode (31). Like *...More Light!*, *Solovki Power* explores the past from a different perspective, and actively seeks to debunk the myths created by the newsreels of the previous era. *Solovki Power*, however, primarily tells the story of the so-called "heroes" (with a lower case "h"), who themselves speak in the first person through interviews.

Goldovskaia claims that the idea to make the film about the Solovki camp came out of her conversations with one of the spiritual leaders of the Russian intelligentsia, Dmitrii Likhachev. She remembers that Likhachev told her that "it would be good to make a film about Solovki" (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 125). In the mid-1980s he told the filmmaker that he might die soon and wanted her to record his recollections--his autobiographical memory--about his imprisonment in the concentration camp on the Solovki Islands. The filmmaker borrowed one of the first privately owned camcorders in the USSR from an acquaintance, whose name she still does not mention, and recorded four hours in VHS format of Likhachev's recollections about his life in the camp.

Goldovskaia cautiously shared her video of Likhachev with trusted friends and colleagues. Among them was Sergei Solov'ev, the filmmaker and the newly appointed head of the new production unit for art cinema at Mosfil'm Studio, *Krug*, created as a part of the

use slave labor for profit" (20). For further information, see chapter 2 "The First Camp of the Gulag" in Applebaum.

perestroika-era restructuring of the film industry. Both Goldovskaia and Solov'ev understood that neither the orthodox Central Studio of Documentary Films, nor *Ekran* would be inclined to produce a documentary revolving around highly controversial recollections about a Gulag camp, especially after the controversy that had surrounded Goldovskaia's earlier film *The True Peasant from Arkhangelsk* (*Arkhangel'skii muzhik*, 1986).⁸⁷ Glasnost, however, was a time for new openness and Mosfil'm had recently liberalized the approval process for new film proposals. Solov'ev decided to take responsibility for this risky film project and offered Goldovskaia the chance to make her documentary at his new unit (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 126).

The Mosfil'm film project, titled *At Least Save Me by the Solovki Monastery* (*Spasi menia khot' Solovetskim monastyrem*),⁸⁸ about Solovki emerged as a strange combination of *samizdat*

⁸⁷ *The True Peasant from Arkhangelsk* was a direct cinema style reportage covering the daily routine of a private farmer struggling for survival against the economic machinery of the Soviet collective farm, from whom he has to get supplies in the absence of a better contractor. The film, screened on Soviet television in 1987, became a damning document against the state-run economy and ignited the discussion about developing less centralized and state-dependent forms of economic enterprises. Communist hardliners panicked because the film undermined the collective farm regime of Soviet agriculture (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 115-116). This film about the present raised questions about the Soviet past: collectivization, state-run economy, the role of individual initiative, and state control in the Soviet Union.

⁸⁸ Quoted from the filmmaker's original script, available in Goldovskaia's personal archive. This script is a shot-by-shot description of the film including the content of each shot, dialogue, object, time, and place of shooting, and details about noises and music used.

production practices inherited from the Khrushchev-era Thaw, and practices bordering on overt deception and manipulation of the official rhetoric characteristic of the Brezhnev era.⁸⁹ The seed video material for the film came out of Goldovskaia's *samizdat* tape. The idea of making a compilation documentary feature at the Mosfil'm unit specializing in art cinema evoked the late Thaw-era documentary project by Mikhail Romm, Maïia Turovskaia, and Iurii Khaniutin, *Ordinary Fascism (Obyknovennii fashizm, 1965)*. While the Soviet film industry was highly specialized and Mosfil'm usually did not produce documentary films, the precedent of Romm's project provided justification for Goldovskaia's proposal. Solov'ev suggested that Goldovskaia draft a proposal for a film about the place of the Solovki Monastery in Russian cultural history over the course of the centuries and to mention the camp in passing. The proposal was written by Viktor Listov and consisted of approximately fifty-nine pages about the history of the island, its archeology, religion, architecture and art, and one page that briefly mentioned the prison camp (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 126). It used rhetoric about the great Russian historical tradition to disguise the filmmaker's intention of making a film about the Gulag. Moreover, the title, a quote from Aleksandr Pushkin, the premier Russian poet according to the official Soviet canon, provided additional protection for the proposal. Eventually, Goldovskaia received 300,000 rubles, a budget for an average feature film, and seven months to complete it (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 126, 128).⁹⁰

⁸⁹ This is perhaps an indication that the more liberal atmosphere of the perestroika-era documentary industry was either not fully established or not yet trusted.

⁹⁰ It is worth noting here that despite the relative liberal atmosphere of the glasnost years, Goldovskaia paid full tribute to ubiquitous Soviet paranoia. In order to make the film about

During the production of the film, the filmmaker encountered several problems, many of them related to the new tactics she used to make her documentary. Goldovskaia wanted to record unrehearsed interviews with camp survivors, some of them commenting on the 1928 propaganda film about the role of the camp in reeducating political criminals. One major technical problem was that she was extremely short of film stock, which forced her to rehearse answers with the interviewees before shooting, as had been done in the past with official, state-sanctioned documentaries (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 132). Goldovskaia also had to grapple with the lack of information available about Solovki in the Soviet Union. Fortunately, new sources of memories about Solovki from abroad became available during the glasnost era. The filmmaker did not want to attract unnecessary attention from the secret police at home, but was able to obtain books and articles from the United States, Germany, and Australia (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 151). She also tried, often in vain, to find photographs of people mentioned by the protagonists in her film. She decided that “the absence of photos could work in an even more powerful way. [She] figured a black screen could be more effective than a photograph” (151). The black screen became a reoccurring image, emphasizing the repression of memories by the official account of the past and providing a visual manifestation of “social amnesia” as one of the communal disorders inherited by late Soviet society from the Stalinist era.

Finally, Goldovskaia had to deal with her potential interviewees’ refusal to share their personal memories. Victims were still afraid to speak out, while victimizers avoided confrontation with their criminal past. The wife of one former camp inmate, Samuel Epstein, for

Solovki without having to worry about being watched, the filmmaker decided to resign from the *Ekran* unit, where she had been working since the late 1960s (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 125-126).

example, repeatedly told him not to talk, because she feared Stalin-era repressions would return and he would pay the ultimate price for speaking on camera (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 134). Although Epstein eventually agreed to speak, the filmmaker could not persuade another potential interviewee, Dmitrii Uspenskii, to appear on screen. Uspenskii was one of the surviving guards who took part in the execution of prisoners. After discovering that he was still alive, Goldovskaia tried calling him and even attempted to talk to his wife “woman to woman” (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 145). When both Uspenskii and his wife refused to talk to her, Goldovskaia felt morally justified to take his picture in direct cinema style, using a hidden camera, and eventually included several stills in her film without his permission. In her memoirs she claims that she was not worried about ethics here, “in view of the character and the situation” (*Woman* 145).

After the film was completed, it was screened for the Minister of Cinema, Aleksandr Kamshalov, who demanded several changes (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 153). He wanted to remove the phrase “You’re in the hands of fascists now!” which Nikolai Beliakov, a comrade of Lenin, said to the inmate Anatolii Gorelov, explaining that the Soviet camp regime was not unlike the Nazi one in its methods and philosophy.⁹¹ However, since those were Beliakov’s exact words, they were allowed to remain in the film (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 154). Kamshalov also asked that

⁹¹ The first Nazi concentration camp, located in Dachau, opened in March 1933, just two months after Hitler became chancellor. Political prisoners, primarily Communists and homosexuals, were the first to be incarcerated. By July 1933 approximately twenty-seven thousand people were contained in a network of concentration camps and the camp system continued to expand through World War II (Bergen 66).

the mention of *Gulag Archipelago* be removed because Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's book was still banned and its author considered *persona non grata*. Goldovskaia refused to let this go. She called her friend Andrei Grachev, who was close to Gorbachev and in charge of the international sector of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, for advice. He told her *Gulag Archipelago* was an "Anti-Stalin book, not an anti-Soviet one." According to Goldovskaia, this quote from Grachev saved that reference (*Woman* 154). Goldovskaia and Kamshalov could not come to a compromise on the footage of Stalin watching Soviet troops march, a scene that, for both the filmmaker and the minister, evoked parallels with Hitler watching his own troops. Kamshalov decided to shelve the picture, but Goldovskaia was soon told that the film should be prepared for printing as soon as possible (*Goldovskaya Woman*, 154-55). Goldovskaia claims the film was released on Gorbachev's personal order.⁹²

The title of the film also was a source of controversy during its release. Although the title *Solovki Power* had not been approved because of its allusion to the term "Soviet Power," Goldovskaia's student and television personality Aleksandr Politkovskii announced *Solovki Power* as the title of Goldovskaia's new documentary project during a broadcast of the popular perestroika-era talk show *Vzgliad*. The new title, after its broadcast in the media, was allowed to stay.⁹³

⁹² Personal communication with the filmmaker (2006).

⁹³ Personal communication with the filmmaker (2006).

5.5 SOLOVKI POWER: A DIFFERENT FORM OF DOCUMENTARY NARRATIVE

While Babak's ... *More Light!* attempts to distance itself from the state voice through a well-known narrator and an opening intertitle signed by the authors of the film, it continues the tradition of providing one primary perspective on the history it presents. In *Solovki Power*, Goldovskaia replaces the homogeneous official narrative of Soviet history with a set of heterogeneous voices of new "heroes," providing alternative accounts of Soviet history, specifically the history of its most notorious early camp. They share their autobiographical memory and open up a new conversation about the past, paving the way for a change in how the past is remembered. *Solovki Power* offers three major types of narrative voices: the author, the interviewees, and the narrator. Their lack of a consistent narrative challenges the timeless uniformity of the official Soviet narrative of the inexorable progression to communism.

Solovki Power represents a shift that was becoming increasingly prevalent during the perestroika-era: a change from the idea that the state has authorial control over the content of documentary films, with its ability tightly to control the filmmaking process from script to screening, to the director as the implied author of the film.

The film's title announces the powerful authorial presence, which organizes, but does not dominate, the film. *Solovki Power: Evidence and Documents (Vlast' solovetskaia: Svidetel'stva i dokumenty)* sets the narrative tone. The author provides a graphic example of the authorial intervention via the compilation and recycling of pre-existing linguistic and visual material. The filmmaker takes the Soviet ideological cliché "Soviet power," and transforms its meaning by replacing "Soviet" with "Solovki." The title redefines Soviet power as the rule by and through concentration camp-like repression. The subtitle *Evidence and Documents* implies that the

stories and memories that follow speak the truth and provide long-awaited evidence of the state's offenses.

The author emerges in Goldovskaia's documentary through her editing choices, which determine the film's narrative and ideological motivation. It uses editing to reassert that the memories expressed in this film are not just stories but evidence. As Pierre Nora writes, how groups understand their own past matters and these memories are used to put the regime on trial by public opinion, reinforced by the new policies of glasnost. Goldovskaia accompanies the interviewees' stories with images of historical documents. For example, when one of the former inmates and a source for Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*, Olga Adamova-Sliosberg, discusses how she did not recognize herself in a mirror but instead saw her mother, Goldovskaia first shows an old photograph of Adamova-Sliosberg, followed by a photograph of her mother, and finally both side-by-side. The viewer sees the similarities between the pictures and, consequently, the implied truth of her story: a young woman, within several years of camp torments, ages by decades. Photographs of the unnamed man who, according to Goldovskaia, took part in the 1929 execution of three-hundred people, emphasize the veracity of Dmitrii Likhachev's retelling of this incident, where drunken guards killed hundreds of people just to intimidate the rest of the inmates.

Goldovskaia combines editing with the effective use of *mise-en-scène* in order to emphasize the strong ideological and aesthetic presence of the author. The filmmaker's juxtaposition of public and private space informs the audience how to relate to the individual characters. She films her interviewees primarily in their own private residences, an environment emphasizing their individual personalities. These private spaces are juxtaposed via editing to the

public spaces of the camp, where privacy was eliminated in an effort to destroy the individuality of the inmates.

One of the key props in the interviewees' apartments is books. The book titles give viewers hints about the characters' perspectives and portray them as unique individuals. The Dante volume on Aleksandr Prokhorov's desk invokes the hell he went through during his arrest and camp years, and at the same time reflects on the interviewee's humorous mode of narration. While depicting the terrible hours of his arrest, Prokhorov also jokes about the secret police agents' corruption. The NKVD officers searched through his belongings looking for non-existent counterrevolutionary literature, and simultaneously looted clothing and office supplies that he had brought home from his business trip to America.

The props also reveal the ideological allegiances and social status of the interviewees. All of them condemn Stalin but several of them still believe in the power of socialist ideology and the purity of Leninist revolutionary ideals. On Prokhorov's desk, next to Dante rests a volume of Lenin's works. Another interviewee, Samuel Epstein, keeps a book titled *Komsomol Generation* on his desk. Viewers also learn that most of Goldovskaia's characters are intellectuals because, in an almost type-like manner, Goldovskaia portrays them with glasses. Even when the protagonists are not wearing glasses, the glasses are still in the shot: Epstein's are sitting on his desk, while Likhachev, the most respected member of the intelligentsia in *Solovki Power*, holds not one, but two pairs of glasses in his hand at times.

Public space has three incarnations in the film: a monastery, a center of pre-revolutionary spiritual life; the camp, an epicenter of Stalinist hell; and the abandoned camp in the present. The Stalin-era camp exists in juxtaposition to the present-day private spaces of survivors'

apartments. The filmmaker intercuts between visions of cheerful camp life as portrayed by the propaganda film and the interviewees' personal comments about the blatant lies in the footage.

Present-day Solovki appears in need of restoration: the monastery is destroyed, and the stars, which Bolsheviks used to replace the Christian crosses, are also in disrepair. The camp was closed in 1939, but the monastery has still not been restored. While the majority of her characters-interviewees represent the intelligentsia, Goldovskaia chooses a different kind of camp survivor to bring to the abandoned monastery with her film crew. Efim Lagutin is the only working class voice in her stories of camp inmates. He describes his crime as the fact that, as a very young man, he ran away from home and wanted to travel. The secret police arrested him for attempting to cross the state border and sent him to Solovki. As opposed to the intelligentsia, who serve as the agents of the ideology that was capable, according to the filmmaker, of redeeming society after years of the repressive regime, Lagutin represents the plight of Russia's common folk, thus adding to the dialogic account of the camp, and his return to Solovki plays a symbolic role. The simple Russian man returns to the site of Soviet crimes to close this chapter of Russian history. Lagutin and the film crew chisel the dates of the camp on the gray boulders surrounding the abandoned monastery, thus giving closure to the period of Stalinist crimes and opening a new chapter of Soviet history.

In another strategic authorial choice, Goldovskaia allows the interviewees to tell their own autobiographical memories in their own way, thus reconstructing the portrait of Solovki camp as it affected individual lives. Goldovskaia's voice is only heard once, during an interview with Prokhorov. Otherwise, each protagonist speaks unscripted, although rehearsed, and uninterrupted, providing her or his unique perspective and experience. Goldovskaia's choice of interviewees and their individual characters help build the multi-voiced, ambiguous, and

sometimes conflicting new collective memory, opposed to the homogeneity and uniformity of the official Soviet memory and even to the “hero” of Babak’s film. Goldovskaia searched for witnesses of the Solovki camps, trying, she claims, to make her films as “representative as possible... [with] people from all walks of life, to show the era through them as fully as possible, demonstrating our conclusion that the Solovki experience was the experience of the entire country” (131). This group of people connected with the camp form their own collective and their story is integrated into the greater collective memory of the Soviet past.

Goldovskaia’s selection of interviewees is twofold and incorporates into the collective memory the story of two distinct groups. Through her extensive use of stories from the suffering intelligentsia, the filmmaker creates a Gulag story of martyrdom and spiritual perseverance. The filmmaker’s intelligentsia consists of socially-engaged intellectuals capable of giving Soviet Russia a different and just social organization. For Goldovskaia, the focus on these intellectuals helps to create a shared ideology and camp story comprised of different individual experiences.

Goldovskaia also includes a variety of different voices from outside of the intelligentsia, such as Lagutin, a working-class man, and even a former Chekist, who guarded the camp. By including the portraits and information about the secret police and Red Army officers who helped create the Solovki camp but eventually ended up themselves as camp inmates or being executed by the Stalinist state, Goldovskaia tries to create a sense of the state as one big camp, for which Solovki provided a model. On the one hand, the film claims that no one could escape imprisonment and death in a state modeled on the camp; on the other hand, by emphasizing that the fate of executioners mimicked the fate of their victims, the filmmaker obfuscates the role of agency, both personal and institutional, in Stalinist crimes. She suggests that everyone was a victim of the Stalinist state and indirectly exonerates or at least avoids, possibly for censorship

reasons, the question of institutional and personal guilt of the secret police and its operatives in enforcing Stalinist genocide.

The voices of the interviewees themselves fulfill two major functions. First, they articulate ideologies alternative to those of the Solovki camp, challenging the official party narrative of the camp. Second, they form an alternate community that supposedly can save Soviet society from the state, which, according to the film, is a direct descendant of the camp. The intelligentsia plays the lead role in *Solovki Power*. When Goldovskaia started filming, her original idea was to make a documentary about Likhachev, whom she presents as a leading alternative voice, opposed to the voice of the official Soviet memory. While recording his recollections, Goldovskaia decided to make this film about Solovki instead of another film-portrait of an exemplary intellectual.

Goldovskaia needed to find another, more emotional character, who would still exude a similar intelligentsia authority. She discovered Volkov, who was arrested in the 1920s because he refused to be an informant. Goldovskaia describes his fiery personality as the “polar opposite” of Likhachev’s forgiveness (128). Although he is not as well-known as Likhachev, his Tolstoi-esque appearance, exudes intelligentsia authority, invoking an iconic nineteenth-century image of a politically-engaged intellectual opposed to a repressive state.

While Likhachev forgives and Volkov protests against his Stalinist tormentors, Epstein and Prokhorov claim that not all Soviet experience was equal to the Stalinist state, and Leninist revolutionary ideals should be separated from Stalinist crimes. Epstein has preserved his faith in communist ideas and articulates his confusion regarding his arrest by explaining how he was arrested along with the very man whose signature appeared on Lenin’s party card. This man’s arrest indicated a problem with what Soviet communism had become under Stalin, not with

Lenin's ideology, because, for Epstein, the Leninists were still faithful believers in pure socialism who could not be arrested. Through Epstein, Goldovskaia found another believer in socialist ideas, Prokhorov. He was an engineer and Moscow metro builder, who was sent to study the latest technology in America in 1934. He returned in 1936, and was arrested in 1937 (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 136). Both Epstein and Prokhorov's continuing faith in the communist utopia are evident in the film through the mise-en-scène. During the interviews, viewers see books invoking communist ideology on their desks. Additionally, Prokhorov not only has a bright red telephone on his desk but also a bust of Lenin. Even though something has gone awry with the system under Stalin, Epstein and Prokhorov continue to believe in socialist ideals. Their faith both provides evidence for the redefinition of the Soviet project under Gorbachev and offers a version of history and the Soviet state that is incompatible with Volkov's version.

Although the women in *Solovki Power* are not ideologues, they are instrumental in creating the new intelligentsia community as an alternative to the official state community. The women's main role in this film is not to tell their own memories, but rather to preserve the memories of their murdered brothers and husbands, and to reestablish human contact between surviving former inmates scattered by the state via imprisonment and social displacement. Adamova-Sliosberg recalls not only her own memories of Solovki, but also memories of her husband's arrest. The other main female protagonist, Zoia Marchenko, recollects how the secret police harassed, arrested, and interrogated her brother (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 132). Her ability to remember was her major crime. When the NKVD found her descriptions of her brother's interrogation, she was also arrested and spent twenty-one years in prison and exile (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 132). While Marchenko's recollections about her brother serve as important evidence in the film, it is her ability to connect the filmmaker with camp survivors that

puts her in a unique position in the structure of the community of camp survivors. Out of her acts of remembrance, new male survivors emerge on the screen. For Goldovskaia's memory project, women not only reconnect male commemorators, but also reestablish the intelligentsia as a community of both men and women, capable of regeneration.

While interviews with intelligentsia men and women establish an alternative ideological community able to resist official ideology, Lagutin's interview provides, on the one hand, melodramatic dynamism to Goldovskaia's story of the Solovki camp and, on the other, blurs the borders between the Solovki camp, the Stalinist state, and the Soviet state project. Lagutin is a little man, not a member of the intelligentsia. He was an innocent orphan when the Soviet secret police brought him to Solovki at the age of fourteen. Lagutin is an essential character for linking the Solovki camp to the USSR as a whole. While all the intelligentsia interviewees are depicted in their comfortable middle-class apartments, Lagutin appears in the film primarily against the background of the abandoned camp and his life seems not to have changed since his years in the camp. While no one in the film says this overtly, Lagutin's continued displaced existence implies that little in principle has changed in the way the Soviet state has operated since the formation of the camp. Notably, Lagutin is the only character who exists in both the 1920s propaganda footage and the filmmaker's own 1980s footage. Goldovskaia was able to find footage of him in *Solovki* and then film him on that very spot to visually "form a bridge from that time into ours" (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 142). These two shots create a temporal frame that challenges the official chronology of the Stalinist era by offering the idea that the two periods are not as different as they seem, thus suggesting that the 1980s is the time when these memories should finally be brought to light and the Soviet project needs to be redefined.

To give background information unknown to Soviet viewers and to supplement the interviewees' stories, Goldovskaia adds another voice to the counter narrative: that of a narrator, provided by fellow filmmaker Aleksandr Proshkin, who had just completed his film about the 1953 amnesty of Gulag prisoners, *Cold Summer of '53*. Her narrator, opinionated and unreliable, is a radical departure from the omniscient Soviet-era newsreel voiceover. Goldovskaia's goal in choosing her narrator's voice was to replace the official voice with a subjective one, one that is emotionally and ideologically close to the filmmaker. Proshkin himself took an active role in the making of the film. He participated in the production of the film's script, along with Goldovskaia and Listov, and later improvised in the course of the film's production (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 152-3). He was a collaborator rather than a voice to pronounce the lines assigned to him by the filmmaker.

The official narrator's voiceover in Soviet-era documentaries usually closely guided viewers, making sure that they would interpret images as they were intended to be read. Goldovskaia's non-omniscient and highly personal narrator-interlocutor allows the audience room for personal interpretation, informs the audience that the Soviet experience is greater than the official story about it, and encourages this audience to explore the unknown pages of the tragic Soviet past. The narrator, like Babak's, directly identifies with the viewer, using the pronoun "we" frequently throughout the film. As opposed to an official voice, he admits when he does not know facts because they were hidden by the state as evidence of its crimes, a technique used in Alain Resnais' pivotal film about Nazi concentration camps, *Night and Fog* (*Nuit et brouillard*, 1955). This happens on several occasions in the course of the film. For example, the narrator questions if it was really the monks, as was suspected, who set fire to the Solovki monastery before the Soviets transformed it into a prison in 1923, or if it was perhaps

embezzlers from a local state farm. “There is much we don’t know,” he adds. He expresses similar uncertainty about the end of the Solovki prison, saying that nothing is known about the prisoners that did not go to Siberian work camps. Instead, the narrator offers a rumor as a possible explanation: “Many say that Siberian camps only took people who could work. The rest were loaded into a barge and sunk in the White Sea.” Proshkin also seems to revel in his sometimes ironic tone, bordering on sarcasm. While talking about Matvei Pogrebinskii’s book *Factory of People* (*Fabrika liudei*, 1929), about how to process humans as a form of raw material, the narrator asks sarcastically “did the Chekists think of themselves as raw material as well?” The subsequent scene provides an ironic answer. The secret police operatives who thought of their class enemies as human raw material ended up being the raw material themselves to be fed to the camp machinery.

The narrator freely expresses opinions and emotions, while his monotone voice challenges the cheerful mode of Stalin-era footage. Commenting on images of crowds cheering enthusiastically, he expresses regret: “If only we could make history run backwards and warn them that their enthusiasm and cheers would drown out the shots and the cries of the tortured.” After Andrei Roshchin, a Chekist guard whom Goldovskaia interviewed, describes how the political prisoners were “absolutely free,” Proshkin ironically comments “Here is where they were absolutely free” as the camp barracks and barbed wire of the Solovki camp are shown. This emotional, subjective, and at times ironic and sarcastic narrator fits perfectly with the story Goldovskaia had hoped to create, recalling that “the result was much more powerful than [she] had imagined” (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 153). In short, *Solovki Power* offered late Soviet viewers a new way of constructing their collective memory, or their master narrative, as an alternative to

the rigid monologism of the Soviet documentary film tradition inherited from the Stalin and Brezhnev eras.

5.6 ...MORE LIGHT!, SOLOVKI POWER, AND CULTURAL TRAUMA

In their investigation of the past, both films attempt to respond to the critical questions for resolving cultural trauma. ...*More Light!* offers cursory answers, whereas *Solovki Power* provides a more precise exploration. ...*More Light!* deals with the general problem of Stalinism that haunts the Soviet Union, without delving much into the details. When it focuses on a specific incident, it is usually an event that affected essentially the entire country, with most attention devoted to the trauma of the Great Patriotic War and how Stalin exacerbated the situation by purging the military leaders in the years leading up to the war, including a long list of the names, and birth and death years of those who perished in the purges. ...*More Light!* portrays trauma as anonymous and massive. The narrator talks about the fate of “the people” and “the soldiers” in general terms, and conveys the enormity of the war by saying “we’re used to this unbelievable figure: twenty million fell.” Babak uses this approach for other times of hardship, discussing how “the people” (*narod*) suffered in the 1930s and in the late 1940s and early 1950s. By generalizing the nature of the victims, Babak allows her audience to identify with them--everyone, in some way or another, was affected by Stalinism. Babak places the blame for the damage done to the Soviet people on Stalin, connecting others who disrupted the natural progress of the Soviet Union back to him.

Solovki Power explores one specific aspect and site of cultural trauma, the Gulag camp at Solovki, and uses it as a metaphor for the entire Soviet experience. Goldovskaia’s film tells the

story of specific victims of this trauma in great detail and in their own words. The community she builds in the film relates the victims of trauma to the wider audience in two major ways. First, the community she builds, comprised of members of the intelligentsia and the working class, gives the majority of members of society someone to whom they can personally relate. Second, as in Babak's film, the narrator addresses the viewer using the pronoun "we." Goldovskaia does not explicitly blame any one person for this trauma. She primarily focuses her attention on the problems of "the system" under Stalin, but also implicates the individuals who were cogs in the Stalinist machine, such as Uspenskii. She subtly alludes to Lenin's role in the founding of the camp, by including the date of the first prison transport: 1923. Although this is the only reference to Lenin's culpability in the film itself, Goldovskaia discusses this aspect of the film in her memoirs, noting the shock she felt when she realized "It all happened during Lenin's lifetime, which meant the camps had been started by Lenin and not by Stalin, as [she] had been led to believe" (139). She also includes an anecdote from the first screening of the film, where one of her protagonists, Volkov, mentioned that it was Lenin who invented all of this and that Stalin just followed him. This too brought both applause and looks of horror from the audience (155).

5.7 CONCLUSION

In the end, ...*More Light!*'s subtle approach was not enough to satisfy audiences. Domestic viewers disliked its conventional structure and expository mode that told viewers how to interpret the images. They were concerned that it did not go far enough in its exploration of the past. Oleg Kovalov writes that ...*More Light!* "still kept the topic within the framework of the

official doctrine ('bad' Stalin and 'good' system)" (Kovalov "Dokumental'noe," 538).⁹⁴ The film received some positive reviews abroad, such as an article in *Variety* on 30 March 1988 that proclaims "there's rarely a dull minute in this fast-moving docu, full of the colorful posters of the times and unusual newsreels of people great and small" and that "technically high quality, [the] film benefits from good pacing and some splendidly lensed historical footage" (20). The reviewer notes, however, that international audiences have the same problems with the film as domestic viewers: "offshore viewers will see it more as a curiosity item with a pompous, self-righteous commentary firmly steering the audience to the latest correct interpretation of history. It is as conventional in form as any of its predecessors of greyer years" (20). While noting the viewers' disappointment, Kovalov, however, acknowledges the long term significance of the film:

Screenings will cause disappointment... The film, with its naïve and half-hearted design, will soon be forgotten, but over the years will become invaluable psychological evidence of its time, akin to the series of "Ogonek" resounding throughout the country. (Kovalov, "Noiabr' 9" 371)⁹⁵

⁹⁴ "еще удерживал эту тему в рамках официальных доктрин ('плохой' Сталин и 'хорошая' система)."

⁹⁵ "сеансы вызовут разочарование ... Фильм, с его наивными и половинчатыми схемами, будет скоро забыт, однако с годами станет бесценным психологическим свидетельством своего времени, вроде комплектов гремевшего по стране «Огонька»."

Despite its flaws, ...*More Light!* still marks an important moment in the history of Soviet cinema for what it attempts to do and for how it paved the way for future documentaries that would delve deeper into the past and offer a more nuanced interpretation.

Where ...*More Light!* failed to make an identifiable long-term and lasting impact on collective memory, *Solovki Power* was, and remains, an influential film. When the film opened in late 1988 at the Dom Kino film club in Moscow, the auditorium was packed. The protagonists came out on stage afterwards and received a standing ovation. According to Goldovskaia, “the audience applauded them for surviving, withstanding, not breaking, remaining themselves” (155). The filmmaker spent six months traveling, screening the film and speaking about it, with similar reactions all over the country. She recollects how fights broke out after some screenings between those who had been affected and those who defended Stalin (155). The release of this film made people deal publicly with the past. It represented memories that were alive and informing present identities. Goldovskaia describes their reaction:

Two parts of a single nation were fighting to the death. What had happened to us, to our country? Where are we heading? Every screening turned into a public demonstration going far beyond the film--an unforgettable experience! That’s when I understood the power of film and how much a documentary can do (155).

After the film’s premiere in Moscow, it was released in three hundred movie theaters simultaneously throughout the USSR, unprecedented distribution for a Soviet documentary film. According to a survey conducted by the fan magazine *Soviet Screen (Sovetskii ekran)* *Solovki Power* was the second most popular film of 1989 (Erokhin 3). Only Petr Todorovskii’s Soviet-Swedish co-production, *Intergirl (Interdevochka, 1989)*, a melodrama about hard currency prostitutes, received more readers’ votes. In the same viewers’ poll, it was rated an average of

4.17 out of five points, with 81.5% of respondents rating the film as either “excellent” or “good” (Erokhin 3).

The multi-voiced narrative structure of Goldovskaia’s documentary makes it a bridge text between the monologism of Soviet official memory and emerging dialogism and tensions predicating post-Soviet commemoration practices. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, out of the discussion in response to the film and glasnost-era debates about the Soviet past, several collective memory producers appeared and claimed Solovki as their key memory site. Thus *Solovki Power* helped give birth to new organizations responsible for the creation and preservation of ever-changing collective memory. Among them are *Memorial*, the Likhachev Charity Foundation, and the newly established Solovki Monastery. In September 1987, Andrei Sakharov, Iurii Afanas'ev, Sergei Kovalev, and Ales' Adamovich established the “historical-enlightenment group” (*istoriko-prosvetitel'skaia gruppy*) *Memorial* with the primary goal of advocating the construction of a monument to the victims of Stalinist repression in the USSR (Markov 392). *Memorial* turned into the first Soviet NGO that linked human rights watch with the reevaluation of the official story of the Soviet past. The organization’s two primary commemoration missions, as stated in the bylaws are: “the awakening and preservation of the societal memory of the severe political persecution in the recent past of the Soviet Union” and providing aid to the victims of the Gulag system (“Memorial”).

In 1988, Gorbachev supported *Memorial’s* initiative to construct a monument to the victims of Stalinist genocide, and on 30 October 1990, *Memorial* arranged for the placement of the commemoration stone brought from the Solovki Islands to Lubyanka Square in Moscow, across from the KGB Headquarters (“Memorial”). Since 1990 the “Solovki stone” (*Solovetskii kamen'*) became a generic term for the memory site dedicated to the victims of Stalinist

repressions and *Memorial* has opened Solovki stone memorials in many cities and sites of former camps in Russia and Ukraine, giving a permanent and public visualization to the stories reincorporated into collective memory by *Solovki Power*.

6.0 STALIN'S CONTINUED ROLE IN THE 1980S

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In his discussion of Igor' Beliaev's *The Trial* (*Protsess*, 1988), published in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* in 1988, Lev Roshal' writes that

Today we have a situation that gives our, and specifically our, nonfiction films the unique chance to enter into some kind of completely new frontiers, indicating, perhaps, new horizons for documentaries world-wide. Not in any other country in the world today [...] is there such an interest in documents as we have. I can assume that, despite our...continuous and legitimate complaints, nowhere historically, since the days of [The October Revolution], have there been sufficiently favorable possibilities of government production of documentary films with such a, generally speaking, considerable volume of production. (57)⁹⁶

⁹⁶ “У нас сегодня такая ситуация, которая даёт нашему, именно нашему, неигровому кино уникальный шанс для выхода на какие-то совершенно новые рубежи, указывая, возможно, и новые горизонты для мировой кинодокументалистики. Ни в одной стране мира сегодня, [...] нет такого интереса к документу, как у нас. [...] могу предположить, что и нигде нет исторически сложившихся еще со времен Октября таких достаточно благоприятных,

The films discussed in this chapter take advantage of this newfound possibility of pushing the boundaries not only by exploring what happened in the past, but by examining its effect on the present, and the continued role of Stalin and Stalinism in the new collective memory and new master narrative surrounding past cultural trauma created during perestroika.

Beliaev's *The Trial* looks back at Stalinism through many different lenses, including the eyes of those involved in the October Revolution and the perspectives of those repressed by Stalin, such as Nikolai Bukharin and his widow, Anna Larina, who discusses her time in the camps and exile during her interview. Like Marina Goldovskaia in *Solovki Power*, Beliaev juxtaposes archival footage with contemporary images. What differentiates this film from *Solovki Power* is that Beliaev includes contemporary interviews that discuss the state of the Soviet Union in the present instead of exclusively investigating the past. Tofik Shakhverdiev's *Stalin is with us? (Stalin s nami?, 1989)* presents a frightening image of the continued role Stalin plays in the hearts and minds of the Soviet people. Interviewees express their love for Stalin--both for the leader personally and for the order that was in place under his rule--and discuss the supposedly exaggerated claims of Stalinist repression. While many films of this period address the Stalin era out of fear of repeating the past, this group remembers their history because they do not want to deviate from it. The film's framing device, a hypnotist performing a show during which guests on stage make blatantly false statements, leaves no doubt in the viewer's mind about of how to feel about present-day Stalinists.

несмотря на все наши... постоянные и справедливые сетования, возможностей государственного производства документальных фильмов со столь в общем-то немалым объемом продукции.”

6.2 *THE TRIAL II: REFLECTIONS ON THE PRESENT*

Beliaev's *The Trial* is a two part film that takes on the task of "chronicler," using Barnouw's descriptions of filmmaking as discussed in chapter 1, and looks back to the 1930s and 1940s. In the first part, the events of this era are discussed in detail and in the second, hereinafter to be referred to as *The Trial II*, the filmmaker explores the reactions of perestroika-era Soviet citizens to these events, using the participatory mode of filmmaking, which emphasizes the interaction between the filmmaker and the subject. Anna Lawton describes *The Trial II* as "a look at the future of the country conditioned by its past" (142). In this chapter, I examine part II of the film, as I am interested in how the filmmaker uses the past and reactions to past events to characterize the present situation. *The Trial II* explains the current situation in the Soviet Union, particularly as it relates to Stalin's legacy, maintaining Lenin as a point of reference. The interviewees speak openly and honestly about their opinions on the present-day Soviet Union, including references to previously taboo topics.

As a director, Beliaev was quick to adapt to the changes of the glasnost era. Fellow documentary filmmaker Marina Goldovskaia describes her experience with Beliaev in the early period of perestroika:

With the advent of the changes, everything became mixed up. We couldn't tell yet that we were living through a revolution, but the ice had cracked... And my own experience showed that new daring things could be done. I remember that in 1987 at an artistic council meeting, one of our directors, Igor [Beliaev] said "We are undergoing a revolution." And I thought, "God! He likes overblown phrases. This is not a revolution. Just changes. Serious changes, but nothing more." (Goldovskaya, *Woman* 162)

Beliaev, it turns out, was correct, but the path to revolutionary documentary was not an easy one. *The Trial* was originally meant to be screened for the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution in 1987, but its release was held up. The film was made by the *Ekran* unit of Central Television, but the studio was hesitant to release a film that contained a document written by Bukharin, still considered an enemy of the people (Lawton 142). According to Beliaev, *The Trial* was only shown on Central Television after Gorbachev watched the working material for the film and said that it “is an outstanding achievement in documentary cinema of perestroika” (Matizen and Medvedev 584).⁹⁷ Of the film’s eventual release in May of 1988, Roshal' writes “Thank god the film has finally been shown... We have waited for it in the days of the celebration of the seventieth anniversary of the October Revolution, but it did not come through”⁹⁸ and describes how the film had been “arrested” (*arestovan*) and how “pretty” (*khoroshen'kaia*) that term seemed after the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress (38). In the copy released for the international Glasnost Film Festival, the film opens with an intertitle about how it was held up in production: “*The Trial*’s director was prevented from working on this film for eight months. Only intercession by other filmmakers helped the film to survive.”

The Trial II represents an interesting moment in perestroika-era documentary aesthetics and content. It is relatively simple in form, relying heavily on static shots of individuals speaking, coupled with some wider shots of landscapes or groups of people to contextualize the speakers. It also includes some archival footage, although not to the extent that films that

⁹⁷ “являет собой выдающееся достижение документального кино перестройки.”

⁹⁸ “Слава богу, он, наконец-то, был показан.... Мы ждали его в дни празднования 70-летия Октября, но не дождались.”

primarily focus on the past do, such as ...*More Light!* or *Solovki Power*. Its numerous shots of statues, objects that were made long ago but are still visible today and will likely be standing long into the future, highlight the connection between the past and present that is a major theme in the film.

On the one hand, the film breaks away from the traditional voiceover narrative and allows many different people to express their own thoughts within the film. On the other hand, it continues to guide viewers' interpretation of the content of the film--the images seen and perspectives presented by the characters--through its use of music and a powerful metaphoric framing device. One of the earliest moments of the film depicts a crowd watching a group of biblical re-enactors in front of the Lvov Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism as they act out the story of Cain and Abel.⁹⁹ The re-enactors' voices fade out, replaced by ominous music, and a man dressed all in black, except for his white gloves, speaks in Ukrainian. The main points of his speech are translated into Russian text on the screen: "FAITH is everything. To DOUBT is to die. That is the law of the TYRANT."¹⁰⁰ Although he refers to religion in this particular context, his words can also be understood as an allusion to Stalin and to those who simply believed in him and suffered the consequences when that faith was doubted.

The film looks at the present in light of the past. The stories told by interviewees in the film are not for the sole purpose of revealing new information about the past. Rather, they are about the role that Stalinism plays in contemporary society, and to give insight into how the past

⁹⁹ In the Bible, Cain and Abel were the children of Adam and Eve. Cain killed his brother Abel out of jealousy when God preferred the sacrifice that Abel made.

¹⁰⁰ "В ОСНОВЕ-ВЕРА, В СОМНЕНИЕ - ГИБЕЛЬ! ТАКОВ ЗАКОН ТИРАНА."

affected the present and how collective memory of the era has changed. This combining of the past and present is important because, as Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins explain, collective memory is the active past that continues to shape present identity and memory. This is not an easy task, particularly for the participants. In the article “The Unknown Cinema,” Sergei Muratov writes of the film that it “tries--excruciatingly, and with great difficulty--to make sense of the present, the participants of the film recollect the past, without an understanding of which no awareness is possible” (“Neizvestnoe” 33).¹⁰¹

Unlike ...*More Light!*, which advocates for Gorbachev’s reforms, *The Trial II* reveals that there is still much work to do in coming to terms with the past, because, as Pierra Norra reminds us, collective memory is what groups make of their past. The opening text of the film explains the difficulty of even making a documentary that not only explores the past, but looks to the future as well:

The shooting of this film began in the summer of 1987, when the whole world was preparing to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Great October [Revolution]. In our country, the process of democratization had gained strength. We were learning to speak aloud that which had for a long time lain dormant in the heart of each person. The authors are thankful to all the participants of the film, who

¹⁰¹ “Пытаясь - мучительно и трудно - осознать настоящее, участники ленты вспоминают о прошлом, без понимания которого никакое осознание невозможно.”

helped us sort out a difficult and complex time. Turning to History, we thought about tomorrow.¹⁰²

Several of the interviewees in the film talk about the benefits of glasnost, the positive effects it has already had, and where it needs to go in order to be successful. Sometimes these references are very subtle, such as when Nikolai Smirnov mentions that only now is he able to openly discuss the paranoid environment of the late 1930s. The film includes clips from lectures, many of which comment strongly on the role of glasnost and its connection to the past. Academic Nikolai Amosov discusses glasnost in terms of its necessity for a return to Leninist ideals. He says that the ideas of socialism and communism are being revived and that they are the ideas for which they fought in the revolution, a comment that is met with applause. Because of this, he concludes that glasnost must not only be widespread, but also profound and that it is necessary for the country and for its citizens' own personal growth and so there is no way back. He concludes that the ideas of glasnost should, as Muratov phrased it, lead to a new look at old situations, saying "Glasnost should also extend to our past--from the 1930s right up to the death of Stalin." Boris Rakitskii, another lecturer and a doctor of economics, argues that simply reexamining the past is not enough. Contemporary society must also come to terms with the past. He says "We cannot get away from our past. Unfortunately it is always with us. But if we

¹⁰² "Семки этого фильма начались летом 1987 года, когда мир готовился отметить 70-летие Великого Октября. В нашей стране набрал силу процесс демократизации. Мы учились говорить вслух то, что долго лежало на сердце у каждого. Авторы благодарны всем участникам фильма, которые помогали разбираться в трудном и сложном времени. Обращаясь к Истории, мы думали о завтрашнем дне."

do not rid ourselves of its fatal heritage we'll be a people without a future... We must get the courage to cut the umbilical cord tying us to a deviation from Leninism since the 1930s." In other words, the past must remain a part of the collective memory to help shape contemporary identity. Some of the characters, such as the teacher Leonid Grigorchuk, express concerns about a contemporary lack of understanding about the Stalin era, claiming that his students –seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds--say that they should return to Stalinism because goods were plentiful and society was in order.

Like the films in the previous chapter, *The Trial II* advocates a return to Leninism as a solution to the Soviet Union's problems. It then builds on this theme to discuss more concretely what is wrong with contemporary society, not just to praise Gorbachev's reforms as in ...*More Light!* or to discuss the problems that are concretely rooted in the past as in *Solovki Power*. The film links the October Revolution to the present day. Even before the images of the biblical reenactment, the film starts with a frame that says "The Revolution Continues" over a graphic whose colors evoke the idea of a sunrise or sunset. It then features black and white historical footage from the early years of the Soviet Union, including horses charging, soldiers, and explosions. There is a graphic match of horses in historical footage to a statue of a man riding a horse, bringing the two time periods together.

The Trial II uses those who participated in the October Revolution as the voice of reason and to give insight into where Stalinism went wrong. Several scenes in the film focus on a group of participants in the October Revolution, now gathered in Moscow's Red Square. They tell their stories--their autobiographical memory--, discuss taboo topics from the past, assess contemporary problems and debate with one another. The first man interviewed, Leonid Orlovskii, was a member of the Communist Party since 1918 and said he was one of the first

men who guarded Lenin and the Kremlin. He talks about how he and others considered themselves Leninists “one hundred percent” and how his comrades were annihilated before his very eyes for the purposes of Stalin’s consolidation of power. As in *Solovki Power*, there is the sense that something had gone wrong under Stalin when these true believers in Lenin were persecuted, arrested, or killed. Zinovii Gorskii, member of the Communist Party since 1917, expresses a similar sentiment, saying “I worked on the Moscow Committee of the party for seven years and then I was sent overseas. All the secretaries with whom I had worked were killed... They were shot as enemies of the people.”

These men and women openly discuss the terror and paranoia of the late 1930s. Nikolai Smirnov, a member of the Communist Party since 1921, talks about how 1937 and 1938 were dark pages in the Soviet Union’s history. He discusses how espionage was prevalent and how they were afraid to talk candidly with people they did not know well. He also openly talks about the arrest of his wife’s brother on 1 May 1937. He confesses his own mistaken trust in the party, saying “I had faith in our leaders.” Even when his wife’s brother was arrested, Smirnov thought that maybe his brother-in-law had betrayed the party and actually was an “enemy of the people.” Smirnov notes that in 1937, Stalin gave a speech in which he said that with the advance to communism, the class struggle would intensify and Smirnov believed that his wife’s brother’s arrest was just a part of that. He looks back on his own actions in the Stalin era with a sense of regret.

Orlovskii also touches on the lack of trust in the Stalin era and how that had changed since Lenin’s times. He says that trust had been the strong point of the Party, but that it was destroyed under Stalin. He notes that when, during the Civil War, he fought alongside a fellow Communist, he could be trusted not to stab him in the back. But with the Stalinist repressions,

people feared telling the truth and no truth was spoken in the Party or in general. He, however, maintains his belief in the Party. He talks about how he went to war, inspired by Stalin, because he and other Soviet citizens “believed in the Party” and that “Stalins will come and go, but the Party will remain.”

Il’ia Shkapa, member of the Communist Party since 1917, makes this point even more explicitly as he lectures in front of an audience at the Central House of Writers. He suggests that people read “Our Il’ich” in *Pravda* and “Lenin’s Testament,” declaring that they are excellent articles that point the way the Soviet Union should have followed. He claims that if they had followed that path, there would not have been the purges in 1937 or Hitler’s invasion in 1941, because Hitler would not have attacked the Soviet Union if the army had not been stripped of its officers. These claims are met with vigorous applause from the audience.

The Trial II allows characters to speak in the first person, each telling his or her own history, experiences, or interpretation of the past in light of the present situation. They are Muratov’s “heroes” with a lower-case “h,” ordinary individuals with their own personal perspectives. They argue on screen when their points of view do not correspond to each other’s and they openly discuss taboo topics. They do not form one coherent version of history. When Professor Lev Antonenko says “in a country where the power is in the hands of the people who gave the right to decide their fate to one man?” fellow professor Lidia Spektor retorts “you’re still young, Leva, you don’t remember 1937.” Antonenko then explains that his father and uncle were both arrested as enemies of the people and that his family “suffered all the usual consequences,” concluding that 1937 was a “bad year for many of us.” Spektor then confesses that she herself was an orphan and had no family to worry about at the time and that, in fact, she

was the secretary of the Komsomol at the institute then and it was actually a very exciting time for her. These two characters give very different insights into what 1937 meant to each of them.

The interviewees openly talk about events that affected their lives, but which they were not allowed to discuss publically before. One such instance is the story of Ivan Trifonovich Tvardovskii, the brother of poet Aleksandr Tvardovskii, who talks about the campaign to liquidate the kulaks. He says that when Aleksandr found out that his family had been exiled, he did not protest, even though he privately expressed that it was wrong, because he did not feel that he could intervene. Ivan talks about his brother's belief that the goal was to liquidate the kulaks as a class, not as individual people. He thought they would be given a chance to work, only in a different place, and even wrote a letter saying to be patient, that the liquidation of kulaks as a class did not mean the liquidation of people, especially children. Although this scene does not specifically say what happened to the family, the images of open fields of grains blowing in the wind and ominous music allow the reader to infer that not all ended well for the Tvardovskii family.

The film also includes characters who openly criticize the handling of the Great Patriotic War and discuss in great detail the specific problems of the army. In a scene that depicts war veterans celebrating Victory Day in Moscow, two men express their belief that Stalin helped win the war. A young man says that they must not forget the good things that Stalin did, to which a veteran adds that if it had not been for Stalin, they probably would not have won the war because no one else had the will power and iron nerves that Stalin did. The film then cuts to archival footage of the devastation of the war, such as people crying and images of dead bodies, accompanied by music that is both dramatic and ominous, to remind viewers just how great the sacrifices were. In another incident, retired Lieutenant General Nikolai Pavlenko, describes how

the army had to retreat during the Great Patriotic War because forty thousand officers were killed in 1937 and 1938 alone. He cites the number of thirty-seven thousand in the army and three thousand in the navy, and concludes that eighty percent of the commanders were shot shortly before the outbreak of the war. Vladimir Shubkin, a PhD in history, explicitly criticizes the memory of the Great Patriotic War, saying that Russia and the Soviet Union have a history of victories, but that the Great Patriotic War should not be counted among them, with all its defeats and colossal number of victims. He chastises his contemporaries proudly saying that twenty million were killed during the war.

The most controversial feature of the film was its inclusion not only of information about and images of Nikolai Bukharin, but also an interview with his widow, Anna Larina, who reads a letter he wrote her from prison. The introduction of Bukharin into the film alternates between the 1938 trial, images of Bukharin himself, and footage of his now elderly widow discussing Bukharin's positive qualities. In the clips from the trial, the state prosecutor Andrei Vyshinskii speaks out about how the Trotskyists and Bukharinists "have turned into a band of professional spies and murderers" and how they "must be mercilessly rooted out and smashed." The film juxtaposes Larina's version of a sincere and honest Bukharin, with the prosecutor's condemnation of Bukharinists. The most powerful moment in this scene is when Larina recites the final letter she received from her husband before his execution. Like much else in the film, the letter urges present readers--or in this case, viewers--to think about the past in light of their current situation, and expresses a firm belief in the ideals of Lenin.

The letter is addressed to the future generation of Party leaders. It viciously condemns what the party had become under Stalin. Bukharin writes that most of the NKVD at the time of his execution had become a degenerate organization of unscrupulous, well-off officials who

committed heinous acts to oblige Stalin's suspiciousness, and to earn medals and glory. They did not understand that they were their own undoing. He notes that any member of the Party Central Committee or any other member could be accused of being a traitor, terrorist, or spy by these organizations and be crushed and conjectures that if Stalin had suspected himself, confirmations of his doubts would have been found at once.

Bukharin pleads with future leaders of the Party to judge him as they would judge Lenin, again using the myth of Lenin as the ideal. He writes that if he made mistakes in the building of socialism, he hopes his descendants will not judge him any harsher than Lenin did, as they went together towards a single goal along an untrodden path. His concluding lines fit perfectly with glasnost's goal of re-writing and re-remembering the Soviet Union's past:

I am turning to you, the future generation of party leaders. On you rests the historical mission to untangle the ghastly mass of crimes which are like a conflagration and are suffocating the party. Fellow party members, in these perhaps last days of my life I am sure that history will clear my name. I was never a traitor. I would have given my life for Lenin. I loved Kirov. I did not plot against Stalin. I ask the new, young and honest party leaders to read my letter at the plenum of the Central Committee, to acquit me and accept me back into the party. Know that on the banner which you will carry at the victory procession of communism is a drop of my blood.

This scene combines the film's goals of examining the creation of a new collective memory, while discussing taboo topics from the past and maintaining respect for Lenin's ideals.

6.3 STALIN IS MOST CERTAINLY WITH US

Stalin is with us? was called one of the most successful films in revealing the past in the present by Horton and Brashinsky (139). It shows how historical events continue to affect the contemporary mindset. The film was made at studio Chance (*Shans*) and produced by the All-Union Production and Creative Association Videofil'm and TRITE Studio, headed by Nikita Mikhalkov. Horton and Brashinsky explain it was “made just as glasnost was coming into being, is remarkably sophisticated in its effort to capture, tease out, and represent Stalinism from a number of perspectives. [It assumes] the complex existence of the past within the present, which makes the burying of tyranny particularly difficult, if not impossible” (141).

Stalin is with us?, primarily shot in the participatory mode, includes interviews, archival footage, and direct cinema style shots of group discussions about Stalin. It is comprised of twenty-seven sequences (Horton and Brashinsky 140). The film features former procurator I. Shekhovstov, former NKVD officer V. Alekseev, chief mechanic D. Tevsadze, teacher Kira Kornienkova, taxi driver U. Davitazhvili, a chorus of war veterans, writer I. Shkapa, journalist and MVD Lieutenant Aleksandr Berlizov, and convict L. Chekal. Together they form their own group with its own memory of the past, because as Lewis Coser notes, “there are as many collective memories as there are groups and institutions in society” (22). Their memory must be reconciled with the larger group’s memory. The film gives voice to those with unpopular opinions, who engage in dialog with others in the film and with the audience. Their interviews are accompanied by archival footage, which encourages viewers to rethink their own relationship to the past.

At the time of the release of *Stalin is with us?* later in the perestroika era, the content of the film was generally not considered controversial enough to create significant difficulties. The one exception to this was the film's title. The director explains that

The title has a question mark. I didn't put it there. It was put there by Oleg Uralov, Vice-President of Goskino (State Cinema Committee) and the Director-General of the National Videofilm Association. He knew what he was doing. He said that a picture with the title [*Stalin is with us*] (in the affirmative) could not be released. It occurred to me that there was ample proof all around us that Stalin was really with us, that there was no getting away from him. So I agreed. I thought the concession was worth it. The main thing was to preserve the title, and the fact that it is with a question mark doesn't make much difference, for the answer is in the affirmative all the same. (Shakhverdiyev 7)¹⁰³

By the time *Stalin is with us?* was made, many interviewees in other films openly and honestly criticized the Stalin regime. This film, however, gives voice to those who continue to support Stalin, allowing them to speak in the first person. Liudmila Donets says of this film that the discourse is controlled by the Stalinists and the film presents the world from an honest perspective of a Stalinist ("Slovo" 52; 57). Shakhverdiyev explains that

A sizable part of the population in this country are still ardent supporters of the Stalin times, they praise "order," "the strong hand," and the "constantly accelerating tempo." Everybody knows today the price of the "tempo." But only a

¹⁰³ This article appeared in an English-language film magazine. I use their transliteration of the filmmaker's name when referring to citations from this article.

tiny stratum of the intelligentsia are genuinely horrified of the price. A far larger stratum hold the opposite view and are impervious to facts or figures. To go on talking about the horrors of Stalinism today adds nothing new. So, I decided to try a different approach in my film. I decided to tell about the “good” sides of Stalinism. Not a word against Stalin. (Shakhverdiyev 7)

For Shakhverdiyev, the decision to give voice to Stalinists is an important part of the glasnost era. He believes that their voices need to be heard and that they should not be erased from collective memory in the same way that Stalin’s regime had erased other voices. When asked what to do with the Stalinists, Shakhverdiyev he replies “Why should anything be done about them? They exist and it’s a fact to be reckoned with. They, incidentally, includes you and me. It only seems to us that they are they and we are we. When I look at my characters I see some of my features in them” (7). He believes that giving people a free choice about what to believe is a critical aspect of glasnost, even if they believe something that runs counter to the one the regime supports, such as the de-Stalinization efforts. He writes

You cannot make Stalinists change their minds. And there is no point in trying to. We should know and remember that they exist all over the country. All of us who long for democracy and fear it, should get rid of our regimented habits. Stalinism had deprived us of choice. That right should be restored. Democracy can only come about when we are able to hear the muffled voices of those who oppose democracy among other voices. Glasnost means allowing the opponents of glasnost to have their say too. We can only shake off Stalinism by listening to the voice of Stalinists, to our own voice, and then making a free choice. That is why I called the film *Stalin is With Us*, with no question mark. He is still with us. Of

course we will go ahead with perestroika, this is in keeping with the times. But I'm afraid that in the end things will remain as they are. The main thing is not to damage the foundations. Before long, we will find a strong man and bring order to the country. (Shakhverdiyev 8)

In his film, Shakhverdiyev includes many different new “heroes” with a lower-case “h.” They are “heroes” not just because they are Stalinists who are not usually seen on screen, but also because they are from humble backgrounds and professions, such as a teacher, a taxi driver, police officer, and even a prison inmate himself. Shakhverdiyev includes an extended sequence shot in the prison, highlighting an interview conducted with the prison inmate, Chekal, by journalist and police Lieutenant Berlizov. Chekal seems to freely express his thoughts on life in prison, comparing it to life under Stalin. He says “there is the right to work, to rest, and to study. We’ve got all the rights. You do not need a passport. Or to think about finding work. We move in columns. We live modestly, but we have fun, too. In a word: Socialism. Full. Stalinist. The Zone is probably socialism in miniature.” Stalinism still exists in the present reality of this man.

Shakhverdiyev’s pro-Stalin voices take many different shapes and forms. They freely and openly express their continued, unwavering devotion to Stalin, saying things like “Let them execute me tomorrow. I’ll still shout: ‘Long live Stalin!’ Just like innocent people shouted in 1937. If he arrested and killed them all,” a camera pans up to reveal a portrait of Stalin above the interviewee, “couldn’t they have killed or removed him? In *Literary Gazette* they write that Stalin arrested Kalinin’s and Molotov’s wives... Voroshilov’s father in law... Why didn’t they remove him? On the contrary, they shouted ‘Long live Stalin!’ and Kalinin wrote a book about Stalin. And so did Voroshilov. If you arrest my wife, will I write a book about you? I’ll kill you.”

One particularly notable character is Kornienkova, the only named female interviewee, who is described by Donets as having an angelic voice (“Slovo” 55). The film introduces her in a domestic sphere, with sad, reflective music playing. As she sits in her house, feeding her pet birds and sewing children’s toys, she talks about how she has no family or husband and that she knew from an early age that marriage and children were not for her. Instead, she has been a teacher her whole life. The film depicts her interacting with children, supervising them as they play, teaching them to sing a Komsomol song to celebrate the anniversary of the organization’s founding. As she walks alone through the forest, she explains her situation, saying

my family is one man, for whose sake I live on this earth... He was very resolute.. He was happy and had a great sense of humor. But gradually, all those adversities... For me, he was a man with shining eyes where little devils jumped. Every year I go places connected with him, look for those houses he might have seen, walk on streets he might have walked on. The thread that connects that man, who is dead and myself, who is living, is my happiness.

As she looks down, the camera cuts to a shot of the face of a Stalin statue that had been torn down, now covered in autumn leaves, and she confesses “I love Stalin, very much. Very much.”

The interviewees in *Stalin is with us?* engage in creating a dialog both with others in the film--pro- and anti-Stalinists--and with viewers themselves. Donets says that the monologs of the Stalinists are not really monologs, but dialogs with the audience--they are in conversation with viewers’ experiences and thoughts (“Slovo” 52). Particularly as the interviewees discuss some of the positive aspects of Stalinism, such as order and certainty, one cannot watch the film without assessing his or her own beliefs about Stalin or personal experience with Stalinism, especially during the uncertain period of glasnost. As Horton and Brashinsky explain, the film

not only invites, but demands audience participation and dialog (141). This creates a multi-faceted memory and approach to thinking about the past.

The interviewees are also in dialog with each other and openly disagree with others on screen. The viewers are introduced to Alekseev as he is in the middle of a meal with a group of other, unidentified people. Alekseev gives a monolog, defending the Stalinist trials and Stalinism in general. He talks about how the trials were conducted in a strictly business-like, normal manner, no one interrupted the accused, and how everything was completely normal. The accused were not beaten, because it was not needed. He claims that that Solzhenitsyn invented this claim and goes on to say that because they are rehabilitating people like Solzhenitsyn this is a direct attack against Lenin himself, because Lenin said “we will be merciless to those who interfere with creating happiness for our people.” As Alekseev gets further into his monolog, those dining with him begin to ask questions and Alekseev becomes defensive, realizing that his companions do not share his views. He accuses the woman sitting next to him of “absolutely” not knowing history and, even scarier in his opinion, not wanting to know history. This scene comes to a climax when another man dining with Alekseev points out that Alekseev is still convinced of Stalin’s innocence, but that this other man is “glad that you can say such things and get away with it, that the time has come that a man can say everything he thinks. I am glad that you can say in public that the party is on the wrong path, that we do not need any kind of perestroika.”

Another important confrontation between interviewees occurs during a scene that depicts a rehearsal of a war veterans’ choir, where one man suddenly recognizes and confronts the man who denounced him back in 1947. The other war veterans listening to this conflict, who have been previously identified as either pro- or anti-Stalin, do not know how to react to this

surprisingly open and honest dialog and begin to smile and laugh out of discomfort at the two men yelling at each other. This highlights the problematic place of the Stalin era in contemporary collective memory.

The interviewees in the film openly disagree not only with those on screen, but with the filmmaker himself. As Tevsadze gives his monolog, he is interrupted by an off screen voice that reminds him “twenty million were killed in Stalin’s prison camps.” Tevsadze replies:

It is not true. I do not believe it. Twenty million killed apart from the war victims? I do not believe it... But even if it is true, there were two hundred million living in the Soviet Union. Ten percent turned out to be enemies of the people, but ninety percent were supporters. Twenty million is not ninety percent. It is only ten percent. As we move towards socialism, the class struggle sharpened. Consequently, there were trials and arrests. There will always be arrests. If there are punitive organs, there are offenses. If there is the KGB, the NKVD, CIA, Gestapo, the FBI, there will be trials and arrests. There will of course be mistakes, and innocent people will be arrested.

There is no reply from the filmmaker.

Although Shakhverdiev gives voice to Stalinists without passing judgment as they speak, the framing device he uses gives a clear interpretation of what he presents. As in *The Trial II, Stalin is with us?* uses performance as a metaphor. *Stalin is with us?* begins with a voiceover of someone confessing to being a spy and committing sabotage. After he discusses in detail his crime, bright lights come on and it is revealed that he is a student and his whole confession was part of a hypnotist’s performance. The framing of the hypnotist’s performance at the end of the film more explicitly condemns the mistaken beliefs of the Stalinists. The hypnotist, Mikhail

Shoifet, is shown at his performance, with several young people in a trance. The camera zooms out to show rows and rows of such people. The film then cuts back to a group of the Stalinists featured in the film. They discuss potential names for the film, including “Stalin is with us,” then they toast to their “beloved Stalin.” As “Song of the Motherland” begins to play, the film then cuts to archival footage of people cheering and shouting “Stalin! Stalin!” It cuts to similar groups of people cheering for Mao Zedong, and then to masses cheering for Adolf Hitler. It then cuts back to a close up of Tevsadze, who says “wide groups of people and the masses are never mistaken. In the end, they are never mistaken. It is well known that the people followed Stalin and the party... Since they followed Stalin, that means they loved and respected him.” The visual cuts to the next scene, back to the hypnotist, as the voiceover continues “That means he was right in his great work. By tyranny and despotism, not one leader gained respect and love of wide groups of people. The people are never mistaken. The people understand everything very well.” After he says this, the hypnotized young man says that a piece of white paper is black, and a black paper is white. The film then cuts back to a statue of Stalin, explicitly linking the state of hypnotization and the denial of the obviously true back to Stalin.

Stalin is with us? does not just look at the past in light of the present situation, but also the present situation as it has been affected by people’s beliefs from the past. It explores the contemporary memory of Stalin, drawing many comparisons between Stalinism and perestroika. Kornienkova openly discusses how she no longer believes that the country is working to build socialism and that what she refers to as “glasnost” had been around under Stalinism. She says

Who am I? The most ardent, most open Stalinist. I have never hidden that and will not now. I think I am right. Real communists, even repressed ones, never doubted the validity of the Party policy in the building of socialism. Even in the

camps they believed in the correctness of what was happening in the country. I prefer to spend my life in prison but be confident that my country is building socialism. Today, I do not believe we are building socialism. There was always glasnost. I believe there was glasnost under Stalin. They were openly (*glasno*) arrested, openly shot... openly rehabilitated. I truly believe there will come a time when that man will be given his due.

Several interviewees express a desire for some aspects of Stalinism to return. Tevsadze says that if everything had gone according to Stalin's plan, their standard of living would be much higher than America's. When asked who the enemies of today's perestroika are, he describes them as those who "blacken Soviet reality." He says that western culture and ideology are attractive, but harmful and that both leaders and everyday citizens must work to imbue the people with faith in the system so that they believe in socialism like they believed during Stalin's times. Many specifically refer to the sense of responsibility and discipline that people seemingly had under Stalin. Davitazhvili claims that "Stalin said 'perestroika' once and the people unquestionably obeyed." Now, he says, you read about perestroika all the time and everywhere, but no one is actually doing anything about it. The authorities "do not take measures, and so people are dissolute. We need Stalin's laws. There are so many enemies of the people now. Catastrophes at factories, on trains, at Chernobyl. They should all be shot." Berlizov also explicitly says that the people need Stalin to remedy the current situation and the corruption in the government.

An unidentified female interviewee makes the case that being a Stalinist and a supporter of perestroika are not mutually exclusive identities. She says

Those in power say those who defend Stalin are enemies of perestroika. It is not true: we are for perestroika and Stalin. I understand perestroika to work this way:

to make our people like they were in the 1930s. Stalin said that people are the nuts and bolts that hold the state together. If people do not work the state will collapse. Now they say that Stalin belittled people, calling them nuts and bolts.

As she speaks, she is shown tending sheep, a possible metaphor for the people under Stalin. The metaphor suddenly becomes even stronger as, while she talks about Stalin, she unexpectedly and graphically slits the throat of one of her sheep and allows one of her dogs to carry the decapitated sheep's head off in its mouth.

Although the film is primarily constructed around contemporary interviews, the older footage Shakhverdiev includes fulfills two very different roles. Its primary function, as Muratov points out, is to make the viewer become appalled at what they had become accustomed to ("Neizvestnoe" 25). Shakhverdiev explicitly says this was a goal of the footage he included. He writes of these images of parades and of Stalin that "we have got used to all this, we take it for granted." (Shakhverdiyev 7). Much of his newsreel footage is taken directly, without significant editing or any music added. One particular notable clip Shakhverdiev includes is a speech by Anastas Mikoian. Mikoian describes how the young Kolia Shcheglov informed the NKVD that his father Ivan was stealing building materials from the state farm. Mikoian says that Kolia realized that his father was no longer his father because he was stealing socialist property and told the NKVD to destroy his father as an enemy of the people. Mikoian concludes his speech by saying "See what kind of people we have!" At the time, this statement was meant to praise the young man's actions, but looking at it from the perspective of the late 1980s, it becomes a terrifying testament to the power of Stalinism. Shakhverdiev includes other clips whose meaning significantly changes when viewed from decades later. After a lengthy montage of "the happiness we achieved thanks to the wisest and dearest of men," which shows military parades

and soldiers preparing to move into Poland in September 1939, a man standing on Lenin's Mausoleum makes the following speech:

The farsighted foreign policy of the glorious Party of Lenin and Stalin has saved the Soviet state from war that is currently occupying the biggest governments of Europe and Asia. The timely pact of nonaggression signed between the Soviet Union and Germany averted the possibility of war between us. The devotion of soldiers, commanders, and commissars to the cause of Lenin-Stalin and to their country, and the limitless love of the Red Army for the great Stalin make it invincible.

When the audience sees this nearly fifty years later, the speech has an entirely different meaning after this pact was broken and millions were killed in the war.

The second function the old footage serves is as a link to more experimental filmmakers of the past. Muratov notes that perestroika-era documentary rejected the canon of previous aesthetics and film experimentation began to appear more frequently ("Neizvestnoe" 32-33). While *Stalin is with us?* makes modest attempts at changing film form, such as the lack of voiceover narrative and the inclusion of many first person monologs, the camerawork and editing are largely conservative. Shakhverdiev, however, pays homage to Dziga Vertov's experimental cinema. Shakhverdiev includes several clips from Vertov's first sound film *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbassa*, 1931). The clips he uses include images of people tearing down and looting churches, a man drunkenly walking--shown through a shaky and canted camera lens--and the shockworkers Petrenko and Sniianko pledging to give 28,000 tons more coal above the plan target by the end of the year. These clips connect *Stalin is*

with us? to the historical tradition of documentary, while using the genre to promote a different ideological agenda.

Both *The Trial II* and *Stalin is with us?* attempt to move beyond simply addressing the question of what was the nature of Stalinist pain and what was the nature of the victim. Although *The Trial II* includes many specific references to painful occurrences in the past, and information about individual victims and individual personal traumas, it focuses more on the relationship of the trauma victim to the wider audience, specifically how viewers relate to victims. This is evident through how much emphasis the film places on the extent that trauma has resurfaced in the present, making the topic once again relevant for contemporary audiences. The film also deals with the question of attribution of responsibility for the trauma and primarily places the blame on Stalin himself.

Stalin is with us? deals less overtly with questions of trauma. Rather, its interviewees deny or brush aside questions of potential Stalin-era trauma, repeatedly reassuring the viewer that those who were punished deserved it and were treated fairly. The film plays an important role in making the audience think about questions of responsibility, particularly as it relates to those who followed and supported Stalin, without explicitly placing the blame on anyone.

6.4 CONCLUSION

When *The Trial II* film was finally screened on television, six months after its intended release date, it was generally met favorably. Horton and Brashinsky explain that the film was shown on national television in May 1988, shortly before the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Moscow. They write that the night it was shown on television there was very little traffic in streets because

people were home watching and the film was discussed even more frequently than Reagan's visit (132). After the film was screened on television, it was the only television film shown at the first All-Union Festival of Documentary Cinema in 1988 (Kozlov, "Magistral" 46). It also went on to be a part of the International Glasnost Film Festival.

Although the film's delayed release was initially disappointing, both Lev Roshal' and Beliaev agree that, in the end, the fact that the film came out in 1988 instead of 1987 helped its success. The mindset of people during the perestroika era were rapidly changing, and Roshal' writes

It is unlikely that you can claim, that at the moment of the showing of the film in May 1988 (instead of November 1987), its quite sharp anti-Stalinist pathos already overwhelmed the sweeping masses, becoming a material force. In May 1988 we already thought and felt a little different than in November 1987. People think differently, can become confused, make mistakes, you can argue with them, engage even decisively, in a discussion. (44-45)¹⁰⁴

The film was released precisely at the moment when people were ready to engage in this argument.

Shakhverdiev's film was screened both domestically and internationally and was generally well received, winning the grand prize in the International Film Festival in San

¹⁰⁴ "Вряд ли можно утверждать, что к моменту показа картины в мае 88-го (вместо ноября 87-го) ее достаточно резкий антисталинский пафос уже поголовно овладел массами, став материальной силой.... В мае 88-го мы уже думали и ощущали чуть-чуть иначе, нежели в ноябре 87-го.... Люди думают по-разному, могут путаться, ошибаться, с ними можно спорить, вступать, и даже решительно, в дискуссию."

Francisco in May 1990. The message of the film was clear: Stalin is indeed still with us. Film critic Georgia Brown of *Village Voice* called the film by its original title “*Stalin is with us*,” without a question mark, which Horton and Brashinsky interpret as a testament to the clear message of the film (142). The film was seen as presenting Stalinists openly and honestly. Donets writes that “he presents Stalinists as they are not only ready to, but want to see themselves” (Donets “Mai” 318).¹⁰⁵ The film continues to resonate with audiences and in March 2013 was screened at several different locations, including the Andrei Sakharov Center and the International University in Moscow, in commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of Stalin’s death.

Each film fulfills a different function in building and examining collective memory. *The Trial II* was seen by many as an exploration of the past with references to the future, and the film was compared by many to Babak’s ... *More Light!*, often in the assessment that these films did not go far enough in their examination of the Stalinist past. Horton and Brashinsky write of *The Trial* that it did not “seriously” analyze the past, but that there was a lot of excitement about “the ability to show everything with prohibition. They were tasting freedom, not living fully in it” (132). Roshal’ however, believes that in comparison to ... *More Light!* “Beliaev’s film is made with a great deal more ‘cunning.’ More accurate and subtle” (42).¹⁰⁶ Despite its flaws, Roshal’ sees the film’s release as a significant moment in the era of documentary. He writes

¹⁰⁵ “он предъявляет сталинистов таким, какими они не только готовы, но и хотят себя видеть.”

¹⁰⁶ “Картина Беляева сделана гораздо ‘хитрее.’ Точнее и тоньше.”

Namely Beliaev's film, with all of its, I repeat, doubtless virtues, the history of the film's journey brings us closer to the issue of both the fate of this film and the fate of many other films that pleased us, and maybe today we will say more specifically: that we rejoiced from the first moment of meeting them. (45)¹⁰⁷

Stalin is with us? enters a different subgenre of documentary. Donets describes it as an “experiment of documentary mythology, not of analysis. It would be more precise to call its genre not a portrait, but a directed self-portrait, where the author reserves the right to stretch the canvas, prime it, and cobble together a frame” (Donets “Mai” 318).¹⁰⁸ The director uses those who still believe in the myth of Stalin to give insight into the present, to show how the past shapes current identity. The film serves as a link between the documentaries that explore the concrete history of the Stalin era and those that delve into the creation of the myth of Stalin through the people who knew him best, such as in Semen Aranovich's *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* (*Ia sluzhil v okhrane Stalina*, 1989) and *I Worked for Stalin, or Songs of the Oligarchs* (*Ia sluzhil v apparate Stalina, ili Pesni oligarkhov*, 1990).

¹⁰⁷ “Именно картина Беляева со всеми ее, повторяю, несомненными достоинствами, сама произошедшая история с фильмом, приближают нас к ответу на вопрос, касающийся и судьбы этой картины, и судеб многих других лент, как радующих, а может, сегодня уже точнее будет сказать: так радовавших нас в первый момент встречи с ними.”

¹⁰⁸ “опыт документальной мифологий, не аналитики. Точнее было бы назвать его жанр не портретом, а срежиссированным автопортретом, где автор оставляет за собой обязанность натянуть холст, загрунтовать его и сколотит раму.”

7.0 DEMYSTIFYING STALIN AND HIS CIRCLE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As the glasnost era continued, films began to explore, in more depth and from different perspectives, topics that had already been touched on previously. This is the task of Semen Aranovich's documentaries *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* (*Ia sluzhil v okhrane Stalina*, 1989) and *I Worked for Stalin, or Songs of the Oligarchs* (*Ia sluzhil v apparate Stalina, ili Pesni oligarkhov*, 1990). The films use a combination of archival footage and interviews to explore the power structures at work during the Stalin era, as well as the perspectives of those who were involved at the top levels of this system. The films give an intimate look at the lives of and relationships among not only Joseph Stalin, but also Andrei Zhdanov, Georgii Malenkov and others. This act of deconstructing the myth of the great leader is used as a method of coping with cultural trauma, and helps create a new memory of Stalin during the final years of the Soviet Union.

7.2 ARANOVICH'S ROLE IN THE WORLD OF DOCUMENTARY

Like Marina Goldovskaia when she made *Solovki Power*, by the time Semen Aranovich directed these films, he had a long history working in the genre and producing controversial films. In 1965, he graduated from VGIK, where he had studied under documentary master Roman

Karmen. He worked for the Leningrad Documentary Studio from 1965 through 1970, where in 1967 he made a controversial film about Maksim Gor'kii that was shelved and not released until perestroika (Rollberg 54). In his discussion of this film, Oleg Kovalov explains that there were a “huge number of officious myths” (“огромное количество официозных мифов”) surrounding the “founder of socialist realism” (“основоположника социалистического реализма”), but that Aranovich portrayed, instead, a suffering writer, who at the end of his life had become a prisoner of the Soviet system (“Dokumental'noe” 537). Although he could not say everything in “plain text” (“прямым текстом”), the subtleties of his message, including the sad tone of the film, were clear to both the viewer and, unfortunately, to the censors as well (537).

In 1971, Aranovich began his twenty-year career at Lenfil'm (Arkus). During the glasnost era, he released several documentaries that examined the past, particularly focusing on how the lives of certain individuals were a part of that period. In addition to his film about Gor'kii, Aranovich had two other films released during perestroika that had been stalled as a result of conflict with the administration. *The Personal Files of Anna Akhmatova (Lichnoe delo Anny Akhmatovoi*, 1989) included both documents found her in files as well as footage that Aranovich took at her funeral in 1966. This material included images of controversial, but important, figures in the literary world, such as Joseph Brodskii, Marina Tsvetaeva, Vladimir Maiakovskii, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, as well as those of leaders from Nikolai II through Brezhnev, all connected through poetic montage (Lawton 144). In 1981, Aranovich co-directed with Aleksandr Sokurov *Alto Sonata (Al'tovaia sonata*, rel. 1987). Kovalov describes the film as “the most societal film of its time. From the interwoven juxtaposition, the counterpoint to which is the sometimes sarcastic, sometimes tragic music of Shostakovich, emerged not as much

a film-portrait of a great composer, as an image of a restricted country, as if seen through his eyes” (“Dokumental'noe” 537).¹⁰⁹

I was Stalin's Bodyguard and *I Worked for Stalin* reflect “typical” perestroika documentary aesthetics and content. Both films are simple in form. They alternate between archival images, both still photographs and moving footage, and interviews conducted in the 1980s on location at the interviewees’ residences--either at their apartments or dachas--with a few scenes filmed outside of the Central Committee building in *I Worked for Stalin*. This archival footage, much of it not previously released, was part of the appeal of these films. The segments are linked through simple cuts and there are no real special effects, with the exception of a few zooming or panning shots. Non-diegetic music is present, but sparse. They are not cinematic masterpieces, but that was not the point of these types of films.

Both of these films speak from the first person. They feature interviewees who tell their stories directly to the camera. There is no voiceover narrative, nor is there any sort of heavy-handed framing device used to guide the interpretation of the interviewees’ stories, as was the case in some other documentaries of the era like Tofik Shakhverdiev’s *Stalin is with us?* where the opening and closing shots of a hypnotist at work contextualize the testimonies of the Stalinists in the film. Like the films discussed in the previous chapter, these monologs result in a

¹⁰⁹ “Это, вероятно, самый социальный фильм своего времени. Из вязи монтажных сопоставлений, контрапункт которым составляет то саркастичная, то трагедийная музыка Шостаковича, создан не столько кинопортрет великого композитора, сколько образ несвободной страны, словно увиденной его глазами.”

polyphony of voices and lead to dialog with the viewer, in part because, as Horton and Brashinky describe, they are not written by the Party or any one person in particular (137). They use autobiographical memory to help inform the creation of a new collective memory.

The films are very much a cultural product of the period in terms of their production, content, and aesthetics. They came out of the brand new creative association (*tvorcheskie ob'edineniia*) “Golos,” one of several founded at Lenfil'm in 1989.¹¹⁰ These new units were created as part of the new model of cinema. The creative director of “Golos” was fellow documentary filmmaker Vitali Mel'nikov, although “Golos” did not exclusively work on documentary. Like Goldovskaia's *Solovki Power*, which came out of Mosfil'm, these films were made at a studio that primarily worked in feature films, indicating the elevated profile of the documentary during this time.

7.3 STALIN'S BODYGUARD: ALEKSEI RYBIN

While both *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* and *I Worked for Stalin* problematize how the Stalin era is remembered, the films take on this task from different angles. *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* tells one perspective on Stalin's life and legacy--that of Rybin, one of his bodyguards. In telling Rybin's story, Aranovich explores the continued role of Stalinism in perestroika-era society. In many ways, this film is not only about Stalin, but also about how the mythology of Stalin was created.

¹¹⁰ Others founded at that same time include “Lagoda,” “Troitskii most,” “Petropol',” “Diapazon,” and “Neva.”

Rybin gives a very different perspective on Stalin, but it is still one that idealizes him. Valery Kichin describes Rybin as “A man from the Guards, or from the secret police. He has a wrinkled face and gimlet-like eyes which seem to burrow into you even from the screen, the eyes of a professional. He speaks with a confidence and finality of someone who is convinced that the world order as he understands it is unshakeable” (10).

The quintessential cinematic image of Stalin, documentary or otherwise, is grandiose, very public, larger than life, super human, and his praises are sung, sometimes literally, by everyone. The closing scene from of Mikhail Chiaureli’s 1949 *Fall of Berlin (Padenie Berlina)* is perhaps the epitome of this particular portrayal of Stalin.¹¹¹ Following the defeat of Nazi troops in Berlin, Stalin’s entourage is flown into the city. As Stalin steps out of the plane, he is enthusiastically greeted by soldiers and civilians from several different countries, as a chorus sings Dmitrii Shostakovich and Evgenii Dolmatovskii’s “Glory to Stalin!” (“*Stalinu slava!*”)

I was Stalin’s Bodyguard says little, if anything, actually “bad” about Stalin. It simply presents one perspective on the leader and relies on the viewer to connect the dots, to realize how both terrifying and problematic this perspective is, and to understand where this particular viewpoint fits within perestroika-era memory of Stalinism. As Muratov notes in his article on perestroika documentary as “the unknown cinema,” it forces the viewer to become appalled at what he had become accustomed to (“Neizvestnoe” 25). Rybin’s version of Stalin is personal, intimate, and physically human. One of the first stories he tells of Stalin is an incident that occurred in the bathhouse, where Stalin bathed in the same place as “everyone else.” But while this Stalin is physically human--he is also saintly. Anna Lawton writes that Rybin’s

¹¹¹ This film was made as a birthday present for Stalin.

“recollections of Stalin border on the legendary, close in literary style and flavor of the medieval vitae of orthodox saints” (144). He is not just any saint, but a holy fool.

I was Stalin's Bodyguard paints an unconventional picture of Stalin's achievements. Rybin's memory of Stalin differs from traditional historical memory of him. For Rybin, one of Stalin's greatest strengths was his love of art and nearly half of the film is devoted to topics related to this. Rybin says that “Stalin understood art better than any opera star. He knew solfeggio perfectly.” He claims that Stalin knew vocal and choral art and sang in a quartet himself, sometimes with Viacheslav Molotov and Kliment Voroshilov. Rybin returns to this idea frequently, comparing Stalin to artists and describing his interactions with performers at the Bolshoi Theater. One particular incident he talks about involves the composer Ivan Dzerzhinskii, who graduated from the Leningrad Conservatory. Stalin attended premieres of his works, such as *Quiet Flows the Don (Tikhii Don)*. According to Rybin, Stalin asked Dzerzhinskii about his opinions of classical composers. When Dzerzhinskii replied that he felt negatively about them, Stalin supposedly replied “So I thought... I suggest you go buy all the classical scores, put them under your bed, sleep on them” and study them.

The climax of Stalin's glorification in *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* occurs in the theater on the occasion of Stalin's birthday. The scene, which happens near the end of the film, features children wishing Stalin a happy birthday, with their entire message performed in verse. As they stand on stage, the children say

Greetings to our beloved Stalin! Thank you for our happy childhood! There is no brighter one in the world. We promise to study well. Forget the word “failure.”
Today we are young pioneers. Tomorrow we shall be engineers, tractor drivers,

doctors, steel makers, weavers, agronomists, teachers. All roads are open to us, all paths. Just you grow up.

As Stalin, and the rest of the audience in the theater applaud, the film briefly cuts back to present-day Rybin, who wipes tears away from his eyes recalling the beautiful scene, then returns to the performance in the theater, as the curtain, which has “Glory to Stalin” written on it and a picture of Stalin himself, falls.

Stalin, however, is primarily presented in humble, human moments, supporting Rybin’s vision of him as a holy fool who has given up earthly comforts to serve a higher power. Stalin is introduced in the film in his weakest moments: childhood and death. Aranovich includes black and white archival footage of Stalin’s mother and juxtaposes it with an image of Stalin lying in his casket. Rybin tells the chaotic story of Stalin’s death, including who was there and how they all argued over what to do and whether to call a doctor. As Rybin talks, he frequently wipes his eyes, saddened by recounting the details of Stalin’s final moments. Rybin then begins to talk about Stalin’s autopsy, a fitting metaphor for the dissection of the myth of Stalin about to happen in the film.

Rybin goes into great detail about mundane moments in Stalin’s life and Aranovich includes equally banal photographs of Stalin doing everyday tasks, like gardening at the dacha. Rybin’s memory of Stalin is still very sharp and he tells long, drawn out stories that seem to have little relevance, except to reveal Stalin’s human side. One particularly notable example is the story he tells about Stalin and his “best friend Kirov” going to the bathhouse together and unexpectedly running into a worker, Ivan Dubinin, who had not anticipated Stalin’s arrival. Stalin asks Dubinin to build up steam, and Stalin and Kirov bathe. He also tells a story about Kirov and Stalin going on a picnic together and about games they would play on such outings

together. Rybin brushes aside the more problematic aspects of their relationships, describing how Stalin took Kirov to the Leningrad station in 1934 and “Stalin parted with Kirov warmly, embraced him... a day and a half later, they killed Kirov. Such was their relationship.” For Rybin, this was not something to be concerned about.

Rybin describes Stalin’s personal care and eating habits in a way that make the leader seem very down to earth. He talks about how Stalin shaved himself and trimmed his own mustaches with scissors, rather than hiring a barber. Rybin lovingly chastises him for taking poor care of his health in terms of his diet. He says “he liked fried eggs. He ate elk’s meat which has lots of protein. Our staff wasn’t so knowledgeable. Stalin told them to make an omelet, but eggs are high in cholesterol.” He continues that “dinner was usually borsch, buckwheat, dried fruit.” The way Rybin talks about Stalin’s personal habits make Stalin seem humble, bordering on the actions of a religious ascetic. Stalin refused to have new boots made and wore his old ones that were falling apart until the day he died. He refused to allow a special generalissimo uniform to be made for him for the Victory Day parade. Rybin also describes how Stalin would only ever wear one star on his uniform and how he rejected the star of Hero of the Soviet Union that was awarded to him without his knowledge. He said to those who attempted to give it to him, “scoundrels! I haven’t been on the front in battle. What kind of a hero of the Soviet Union can I be?”

According to Rybin, Stalin was not saintly only for his unkempt appearance, but also because of his connections with and generosity to everyone around him. He talks about how Stalin knew all of his bodyguards and could recognize their voices, ordered his retired cook to be given a higher pension, and gave money to his children and to Stalin prize winners. Rybin boasts that “according to Colonel Taratua from the Institute of War History, in 1953, [Stalin] had

only 4.4 rubles in his savings bank.” Rybin tells one particularly endearing tale of Stalin passing a group of people waiting for the bus in the rain. Upon seeing this site, Stalin got out of the car and personally sat them in two cars in his motorcade. Since there were not enough seats for everyone, he ordered that the motorcade return to pick up the rest of the passengers. By the time Stalin had come back, there was a group of over one hundred people waiting for him to come pick them up.

Rybin creates an image of Stalin in which he stood isolated from other members of the Politburo, who, in Rybin’s view, were always conspiring against Stalin. Rybin explains the situation as “Stalin was not as frightening as his companions. With their denunciations and various intrigues. They finished him off in the last years. You cannot say that they formed an opposition to Stalin. But each one was boiling inside, each one was a careerist at heart.” He describes an incident where Mikoian, after Stalin’s death, tore down the leader’s portrait and ripped it to shreds “with relish” as indicative of this climate and everything that Stalin was up against.

Although the film generally revolves around Stalin, it is not a history or biography of Stalin. Rather, it is about someone who supported, and continues to support, Stalin unconditionally, speaking in the first person, without a voiceover narrator or interference from the filmmaker. Donets describes how Rybin “speaks about Stalin as a loving son about his dear father. All of this story is remarkable, you don’t even know what to select” (“Slovo” 52).¹¹² The

¹¹² “Охранник говорит о Сталине как любящий сын об отце родном. Весь этот рассказ замечателен, не знаешь даже, что и выбрать”

personal voice and personal memory, but as applied to a figure that was known to everyone, is crucial in this film.

Rybin speaks openly and honestly about the past, even of moments that would seem to be secret or controversial. He is proud of his service and feels that it is important that his story, and the stories of others like him, be told. In the beginning of the film, he puts on his jacket, still adorned with all of his medals, which he proudly displays, and says that he is not just telling his story, using the word “*informiruet*,” but the stories of others who were close to Stalin since 1933. He lists their names and Aranovich shows their photographs: Vasiliï Tukov, Nikolai Vlasik, Vasiliï Rumiantsev, Nikolai Kirilin, Sergei Solov'ev, Ivan Orlov, Mikhail Starostin, Ivan Khrustalev, “and others.” He contends that keeping their stories as a part of collective memory is important, saying that “we are disappearing from history. But if we do not talk, the devil knows what will happen.” As in Shakhverdiev’s *Stalin is with us?* even if this perspective is not the popular one at the time, it is important for it to not be repressed.

Rybin talks about how he worked as a guard, interacted with informers, and took part in interrogations. As he explains that his specialty was terrorists, the camera zooms into the medals he wears to show just how good he was at this task. He talks about an incident that happened on Arbat Street, where a man said he could take a bomb and throw it under Stalin’s car. As Rybin speaks, the camera is fixed in an extreme close-up on his face. This shot hides nothing about the details of Rybin’s face, mirroring how Rybin hides nothing from the camera in his stories. He talks about how he had about thirty informers from all different backgrounds, blue collar, white collar a doorman, teacher, engineer. He says that they would report something suspicious, and Rybin and his colleagues would respond and check it out.

Part II of the film, titled “An Experiment in Documentary Mythology” (“*Opyt dokumental'noi mifologii*”) focuses more on the character of Rybin himself, even though he continues to talk about himself in relation to Stalin. This title reflects Aranovich’s primary goal in this film, not to reveal something concrete, but to explore the creation of a myth. The intertitles at the beginning of part II explain Rybin’s dual identity: “Alexei Rybin, Sverdlovsk Oblast. Born 1908. Retired major. Lives in Moscow.” and “Leonid Lebedev. Sverdlovsk Oblast. Born 1908. Retired major. Lives in Moscow.” Each title is accompanied by a picture of Rybin. As he enters the room for the second half of film, he again puts on his jacket with the medals. He talks about how the name Leonid came from his work with informers. He was Leonid Lebedev to them. They did not need to know his real name. Even his wife calls him Lenia.

Part II delves more into Rybin’s life in the 1980s, particularly his interest in music. Kichin describes his situation as

Rybin, the film’s main character, has not retired. He is busy educating successors to his cause. He heads a group of amateur accordion players taking them through “musical drills.” He draws inspiration from Stalin, who, according to Rybin, was a great connoisseur of solfeggio, and had even rescued for history the famous final scene of Glinka’s opera *Ivan Susanin*. (10)

In the film, and in Rybin’s eyes, music becomes a way to incorporate discipline, a quality emphasized during the Stalin era that has since been lost according to many Stalinists, into his

everyday life. He not only plays the *baian*, but is a children's *baian* teacher.¹¹³ His methodology borders on militaristic. He explains his principle as "I try to make a person out of a child at once." He says that he has his students practice marching drills, a practice he calls the "method of outstanding teachers." He demonstrates marching and counting, illustrating how the steps of marching correspond to different lengths of musical notes, such as quarter notes. Rybin explains that if you study music "you will develop a love of work and diligence. Your memory improves and your mind sharpens. And much more." He describes his main task as it relates to his students as "Our main task is to make a person out of him so he does not turn into a hooligan. So he turns out to be a man, useful to our socialist society. You have to inculcate hard work. We still have many lazy types. You have to make him work." This perspective relates back to his attempt to hang on to traits he feels were valued during the Stalin era, but have since been lost.

7.4 STALIN AND THE OLIGARCHS

While *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* presents one strong perspective on the virtues of the great leader, *I Worked for Stalin* branches out more from Stalin himself and presents problems of the era from different viewpoints, further exploring taboo topics and presenting a sense of the chaos of the era. It features Dmitrii Sukhanov, who was Georgii Malenkov's assistant, Sukhanov's wife Marfa Sukhanova, Andrei Malenkov, son of Georgii Malenkov, Iurii Zhdanov, son of Andrei Zhdanov and former husband of Svetlana Stalina, and Zinaida Zhdanova, Andrei

¹¹³ A *baian* is a type of chromatic button accordion developed in Russia in the early twentieth century.

Zhdanov's widow. Many of these interviewees either have close familial connections to someone who fell from power or were themselves arrested. Aranovich's choice of interviewees gives voice to the outcasts of Soviet society, a group whose story emerged and entered the collective memory during perestroika.

The film has a similar visual style to *I was Stalin's Bodyguard*. The interviewees are primarily filmed in domestic spaces in medium to close shots, with the camera occasionally moving in to a closer shot. These interviews are combined with archival footage and still photos. Aranovich himself does not interfere with what the characters say on screen. Andrei Shemiakin, in the article "Malen'kaia pol'za," describes the film as:

Aranovich himself rarely interferes in our thinking concerning what is seen (and especially what is heard): from time to time we are shown photographs. In them are visible, for example, how the figure of G. Malenkov "dissolves" into the archetypes of the time while he was in power. And how it acquires its own characters before and after this period... (33)¹¹⁴

The domestic scenes and mundane details included in the film humanize the characters. They fit Muratov's archetype of everyday people who speak freely in the documentary films of perestroika. They are shown in their homes, with their spouses, mothers, or children. Sukhanov

¹¹⁴ "Сам Аранович достаточно редко вмешивается в наши размышления по поводу увиденного (и главным образом услышанного): время от времени нам демонстрируют фотографии. На них видно, например, как личность Г.Маленкова "растворяется" в типажах времени в период его пребывания у власти. И как она обретает собственные черты до — и после этого периода...."

is introduced in a particularly domestic scene. He and Sukhanova sit in their kitchen. As he explains, in very vague terms, how he lost his political posts, his wife sews, complains about the sewing machine, and talks about the china that they received as a gift. Zhdanova is introduced in an equally domestic and intimate way, with a clip of her saying that she'd like to comb her hair before the interview.

The films are also linked through their use of music as a theme. In *I was Stalin's Bodyguard*, music is important in Rybin's life and the end of the film is devoted to this topic. In *I Worked for Stalin*, the beginning of the film picks back up on this theme. The subtitle of the film is *Song of the Oligarchs* and the opening intertitles and sounds are Politburo members Andrei Zhdanov and Marshal Kliment Voroshilov singing the Russian folk song "Nochen'ka." Music is also used to transition into the discussion of difficult topics, such as the song about the prison experience that prefaces Sukhanov's narrative of his own time served.

I Worked for Stalin becomes even less about Stalin himself than *I was Stalin's Bodyguard*, although some elements of the almost folkloric Stalin remain. One particularly notable incident is when Sukhanov mentions that Stalin was never referred to by name by his inner circle, but rather was called "master" (*khoziain*), an act that brings to mind the practices frequently, although not exclusively, associated with the traditional Russian house spirit, the *domovoi*.¹¹⁵

Although *I Worked for Stalin* focuses on several characters instead of just one as in *I was Stalin's Bodyguard*, Sukhanov emerges as a main character. He is the first to appear on screen

¹¹⁵ Linda Ivanits writes that "peasants generally avoided uttering the name *domovoi*, preferring instead to use such euphemisms as 'master'" (52).

and the audience learns many details and specifics from him. For example, he is shown outside of the Central Committee of the Communist Party office building in contemporary times, and explains whose office was where, shows the entrance for the secretaries and members of the Politburo, and discusses how he could enter there without any documents. He also talks about seemingly random small details, such as how when a Central Committee secretary was summoned by Stalin, he first had to go to the barber for a shave. Sukhanov emerges as more of an outsider than a part of the system. He was Malenkov's assistant for twenty years, but was not a secretary, or the son of a secretary, himself, and he eventually ended up being arrested and serving time in the Gulag.

Unlike *I was Stalin's Bodyguard, I Worked for Stalin* includes interviews with several different people. The film reveals the chaos that occurred behind the scenes and the power struggle among the apparatchiks, particularly during Stalin's last years. Their stories combine to create a conflicted, multi-faceted memory of the past. While each character paints himself or his father in a positive light, the interviewees do not have the same unrelentingly positive view of the era as Rybin. These voices are in dialog with each other, sometimes filling in the gaps of the other's stories, sometimes offering a contradictory perspective. Aranovich uses editing to emphasize chaos by pitting the interviewees against each other, leaving the viewer uncertain of who, if anyone, is really telling the whole story. Shemiakin notes the questionable relationship between what interviewees say and "the truth" in the film.

It only seems as if it would be easy to understand the paradoxes of history, if only there were "facts." It is insanely difficult to separate the fact from one's relationship to it, even if the witness does not distort anything and remains silent about nothing. From some moment, the sum of the facts starts to develop into a

potential pattern, and it, in turn, leads to one and not another course of events, presented from the perspective of the descendants as the “iron” connections between cause and effect. This is what the film, which is, formally dedicated to the witness of the backstage intrigues of the Stalinist oligarchs--Dmitrii Sukhanov--who is interrogated with easy sarcasm, but without anger or bias, brings to mind. (33)¹¹⁶

To highlight this gulf Aranovich, for example, shows two different versions of the exact same incident told by different interviewees. Even though these are sometimes mundane stories, it undermines the interviewees’ authority.

One particularly prominent instance of this is a play between Sukhanov and Andrei Malenkov. Sukhanov first introduces himself, then Andrei Malenkov offers his own recollections of Sukhanov and how his father spoke highly of him. Aranovich returns to Sukhanov, who discusses what he knows about the Malenkov family, including that they were very closely knit, and mentions how helpful Malenkov’s wife was. Aranovich cuts back to

¹¹⁶ “Это только кажется, что разбираться в парадоксах истории легко, лишь бы были ‘факты.’ Факт безумно трудно отделить от отношения к нему, даже если свидетель ничего не искажает и ни о чем не умалчивает. С какого же момента совокупность фактов начинает складываться в потенциальную закономерность, а она, в свою очередь, реализуется в том, а не в ином ходе событий, предстающим в глазах потомков ‘железной’ связью причин и следствий. Вот над чем заставляет задуматься фильм, формально посвященный свидетелю закулисных интриг сталинских олигархов Дмитрию Суханову-- допрошенному с легким сарказмом, но без гнева и пристрастия.”

Andrei Malenkov, who explains that his mother had Parkinson's disease and that his father didn't trust anyone else to care for her and that "I've never seen a greater love than was between them." Up until this point, the details mirror each other, but then Sukhanov begins to talk about Malenkov's children and how his daughter, Ol'ga, married a Jew and that the family was not happy with this and successfully convinced her to divorce him. Aranovich cuts to Andrei Malenkov, whose first words are "That's absolute rubbish!"--an immediate reaction to Sukhanov's statement. He then talks about his sister's actual marriage situation. She was not the kind of person who could be forced to do anything at all. She married young and against her parents' will, and although they did not approve at first, once they were married he was accepted. He maintains that they divorced for other reasons. Each interviewee is confident in the authenticity of his own memory of the situation.

The interviews also reveal the chaos and conflict that was prevalent both under Stalin and immediately following his death. Both Malenkov and Zhdanov continue to express their support of their fathers, while painting a negative picture of the other members of the Politburo. Malenkov talks about how Stalin saw his father as his ally, how Stalin did not trust or respect Molotov or Kaganovich, and how he thought Khrushchev was a buffoon. He even tells a story about how his father held Stalin's hand as he died.

Zhdanov expresses concern about how his father's image has been "painted in the darkest colors," even during the era of glasnost. Over archival footage of his father's funeral, Zhdanov talks about his cheerful temperament and sense of humor, and then talks about the struggles his father faced politically. Sukhanov adds to this image of a politician fallen from grace by noting that at Zhdanov's funeral, neither Malenkov nor Stalin nor other political figures showed much emotion.

Aranovich directly plays Malenkov's and Zhdanov's animosity towards the other's father off each other. He shows Malenkov saying that Zhdanov was an ideologist "and a poor piano player, and he thought that was sufficient for guiding the country's ideological life" and continues "that is why I consider him to be a horrible person." Aranovich then immediately cuts to Iurii Zhdanov who claims "you don't have enough film to record all Malenkov's misdeeds." By presenting the chaos, lack of control, and problems associated with Stalin's rule, the film continues to break down the myth of the leader, changing the memory of the past.

The film discusses a greater number of taboo topics, events, and people than *I was Stalin's Bodyguard*, including the Gulag, the Great Purge, Nikolai Ezhov's supposed homosexuality, and frequent references to and stories about Lavrentii Beria, the secret police chief who was executed for treason shortly after Stalin's death. These stories are often only hinted at without going into details, and the interviewees work both to clarify and obfuscate the details. The scene that introduces Zhdanov and his mother illustrates this particularly well. In their introduction, Zhdanov speaks about his mother and all the hardships she faced to be with her husband. She starts to talk on her own, but then says "it was so long ago that I've forgotten many things." Zhdanov cuts her off, saying that "we won't tire you with the details" and then tells a greatly abridged story of Zhdanov's life that includes very few details and nothing about his death.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Andrei Zhdanov was a figure whose policies are strongly associated with the xenophobic and punitive aspects of Stalinist political culture. The time period that these policies were at their height are referred to as *zhdanovshchina* and resulted in the heavy censorship of artists, including Sergei Eisenstein, Anna Akhmatova and Mikhail Zoshchenko.

Another area where they both reveal a lot and yet tell nothing at all is in Sukhanov's story of imprisonment. He discusses some details of his arrest and how he was mainly in solitary confinement. He talks about the diary he kept, gives the dimension of his cell and bed, and explains how he could have visits once a month and a one-hour-long outing daily. He leaves out, however, any references to the negative consequences, either at the time or in the long term, of this whole ordeal.

In *I Worked for Stalin* Aranovich adds to an increasingly complex new memory of the past. He hints at the idea that what would be remembered about Stalin was important even to the leader himself, when he includes a clip of Malenkov saying of Stalin "as a despot, he was not indifferent as to the kind of memory he'd leave behind." What is particularly interesting about Aranovich's project, however, is that he does not neatly deliver this new memory in a straightforward manner. Rather, the film relies on the viewers' knowledge and personal memory of the era, and simply fills in the blanks of their previous memories, instead of telling the complete story of the Politburo. No narrator explains who the members were or what their relationship to each other was, and no captions inform the viewer whom they are seeing in any of the many archival images. Aranovich introduces different generations' perspectives into his version of the past. Not only are stories told of the Stalin era by the children of Politburo members, but Aranovich hints at the future generation by including Malenkov's child in several scenes.

7.5 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CULTURAL TRAUMA OF STALINISM?

While these films touch, sometimes briefly, on all of the questions of cultural trauma, including the nature of the pain, the nature of the victim, and the relation of the trauma victim to the wider audience, they both primarily focus on the fourth question: the attribution of responsibility. Although they are partly about Stalin, they are more about the role that individuals other than Stalin played in this period. They highlight those who followed him blindly, those who did his bidding, and those who attempted to take his unlimited power to use for themselves. *I Worked for Stalin* particularly complicates this idea, when characters constantly attempt to shift the blame from themselves or their fathers to others, such as when Iurii Zhdanov talks about Georgii Malenkov's involvement in the Leningrad Affair and how he was particularly active against those who died, despite his own father's involvement in other political persecutions.¹¹⁸ This issue is, of course, complex because of the familial relationships. Shemiakin writes of the situations described by the sons of Malenkov and Zhdanov as:

A small test of this morality: should the sons of the “negative” Malenkov and Zhdanov condemn their fathers? Stigmatize them? No, of course not. This “of course not” appeared only after the abolition of the myth of Pavlik Morozov. It is another matter that the director specially organizes a kind of cross comparison of the evidence, and about the mechanism of the functioning of the apparatus of Stalin, and about his, Stalin's, life and times, and about the period of the rise of

¹¹⁸ The Leningrad Affair (1948-1950) was the sudden purge of party officials in Leningrad and the surrounding regions, resulting in the exile or imprisonment of thousands. Many of them had been associates of Zhdanov.

alternatives after the death of the Father of the People; and about the fate of two, especially close oligarchs--Malenkov and Zhdanov, and about the arrest of Beria (a version, which strongly differs from the usual), and, finally, about the fate of D. Sukhanov, who was repressed under Khrushchev and under Khrushchev spent ten years in prison--so that at the end the complexity of the very idea of a “truth of history” emerges. (33)¹¹⁹

Despite the potentially controversial discussions, these films showcase these figures all without placing overt or explicit blame or judgment on any of them, perhaps allowing the viewer to contemplate his or her own relationship to the era.

¹¹⁹“Маленькое испытание этой нравственности: должны ли сыновья ‘отрицательных’ Маленкова и Жданова осуждать своих отцов? Клеймить их? Нет, разумеется. На это ‘разумеется’ появилось только что, после отмены мифа о Павлике Морозове. Другое дело, что режиссер специально организует своего рода перекрестное сопоставление свидетельств: и о механизме функционирования аппарата Сталина; и о его, Сталина, житье-бытье, и о периоде возникновения альтернативы после смерти Отца Народов: и о судьбах двух, особо приближенных олигархов--Маленкова и Жданова: и об аресте Берии (версия, сильно отличающаяся от общепринятой); и, наконец, о судьбе Д. Суханова, при Хрущеве репрессированного и при Хрущеве просидевшего десять лет--чтобы в результате выявилась сложность самого понятия--правда истории’.”

7.6 CONCLUSION

When these two films were released, critics were very interested in how they portrayed the Stalin era in a distinct way. In *I was Stalin's Bodyguard*, “many intellectuals appreciated the ironical approach to the topic, but worried that unsophisticated viewers may take Rybin's words at face value, as if it were the film's point of view” (Lawton 144). The film was nominated for the Nika prize¹²⁰ for best documentary film in 1991, but lost to Stanislav Gororukhin's *This is No Way to Live* (*Tak zhit' nel'zia*, 1990). When *I Worked for Stalin* was released in 1991, a copy of its script appeared in *Iskusstvo kino*. In his review of the film, Shemiakin described the impact of the film on people's thoughts as “Aranovich's film is a provocation of our fantastic, infantile impression of history, which we thought of exclusively in terms of the struggle between Good and Evil. Are such systems the only way to maintain some kind of representation of morality in an initially immoral society?”¹²¹ He concluded that “it would be a pity if this methodology of analysis of history will not be evaluated as a means of documentary film. And already, all will be

¹²⁰ The Nika prizes are awarded on an annual basis by the Russian Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. It is the oldest professional film award in Russia.

¹²¹ “Фильм Арановича — вызов фантастической инфантильности наших представлений об истории, которая мыслится нами исключительно в категориях борьбы Добра со Злом. Неужели такие схемы — единственный способ поддержания хоть каких-то представлений о нравственности в изначально безнравственном обществе?”

indifferent if it turns out, that again such a film is ‘not in time,’ and we again collapse into the abyss of total myth-making” (33).¹²²

I was Stalin’s Bodyguard and *I worked for Stalin* are both clear examples of the spirit of perestroika-era documentary. *I was Stalin’s Bodyguard* and *I Worked for Stalin* are part of a trilogy, along with *The Grand Concert of the People (Bol’shoi konsert narodov, 1991)*, that are called by Mikhail Brashinskii the “the image of documentary in the period of glasnost” (“Образцом документалистики периода гласности”). The films represent different ways that the Stalin era continued to shape contemporary identity. Made in a newly formed creative association, they explore and deconstruct the myths of Stalinism, as told through individual, sometimes contradictory voices, and use these stories to help work through the cultural trauma of Stalinism. They share many of the similar themes of films like *Stalin is with us?* and *The Trial II*, questioning the role of Stalin in contemporary society, but delve deeper into the personal history and stories behind the era. They work to demythologize and work through cultural trauma in a way that questions the attribution of responsibility.

¹²² “Жаль, если не будет оценена эта методология анализа истории средствами документального кино. И уже вовсе будет скверно если окажется, что опять такой фильм “не ко времени”, и мы снова рушимся в пропасть тотального мифотворчества.”

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 VIEWING THE PAST THROUGH THE LENS OF PERESTROIKA

DOCUMENTARY

During perestroika, rapid changes in the political and cultural context resulted in equally suddenly shifting conditions for documentary film. The combination of reduced censorship of previously taboo topics, increased audience interest in the “the truth,” new and more accessible recording technology, and the restructuring of film financing allowed for a resurgence of the documentary genre. Documentaries were made on a variety of topics, including, but not limited to environmental disasters, contemporary social problems, and explorations of the past from different perspectives. These films were unlike anything viewers had seen before. In general, they showed audiences previously banned images and figures, they lacked a coherent, singular authorial point of view guiding viewers, and they allowed participants to speak their own opinions. They changed the face of what Soviet citizens thought of as “documentary.”

The documentaries of perestroika approach topics of the Stalin era from different perspectives and with different goals. In this dissertation, I have highlighted three main approaches, but the films take to that task differently. Both Marina Babak’s *...More Light!* (*... Bol'she sveta!*, 1987) and Marina Goldovskaia’s *Solovki Power* (*Vlast' Solovetskaia*, 1988), criticize certain aspects of the past, but promote the idea that the system can be redeemed

through Leninist ideals. ...*More Light!* uses a more traditional documentary structure, with one narrator providing the proper interpretation of the images on screen. *Solovki Power*, however, employs a diverse set of voices, including a narrator and interviewees with different backgrounds and experiences, to give a more complex, and less unified, view of the past.

Igor' Beliaev's *The Trial (Protsess, 1988)* and Tofik Shakhverdiev's *Stalin is with us? (Stalin s nami?, 1989)* explore the continued role that Stalin plays during perestroika, using the voices of different interviewees. While *The Trial* primarily showcases voices that explicitly condemn Stalin and talk about the need to move beyond, in *Stalin is with us?* the Stalin supporters themselves speak openly and unabashedly about their love for the leader, and express their nostalgia for those times.

The final two films discussed in this dissertation, *I was Stalin's Bodyguard (Ia sluzhil v okhrane Stalina, 1989)* and *I Worked for Stalin, or Songs of the Oligarchs (Ia sluzhil v apparate Stalina, ili Pesni oligarkhov, 1990)*, present a more intimate look behind the scenes of Stalin's regime. They share more in common than the previous pairs, as they were both directed by the same director, Semen Aranovich. Both use the combination of archival footage and contemporary interviews, and both rely on personal details. In *I Worked for Stalin*, Aranovich uses the experiences of different interviewees to delve deeper into taboo topics, and often uses their conflicting stories to highlight the chaos and uncertainty of the era, an image of the time period that is contrary to the stability and discipline espoused by Stalinists in both *I was Stalin's Bodyguard* and *Stalin is with us?*

The differences in approach among these six films is noteworthy for two main reasons. First, it reflects how rapidly the genre changed. The films that could be made, and that attracted critical attention for their radical content, in 1987 were very different from those that appeared

in 1990, which tended to be more nuanced and offer a wider variety of different perspectives. Second, perestroika is the beginning of a fragmentation of collective memory and of individuals finding and speaking in their own individualized voices. These films represent not only the fragmentation of the interviewees' voices, but of the filmmakers as well. They are adding their own contributions to a new collective memory and building a new master narrative about the cultural trauma of Stalinism.

8.2 LOOKING FORWARD

Perestroika was a time when everyday people flocked to see new documentaries. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed, so had people's interest in documentary cinema. As Andrew Horton notes, "for a few years there was a wonderful rush to tell the truth on film about Russia's past...Now people know the truth and they don't want to hear more" (qtd Smith). Anna Lawton comments on how the onslaught of sudden truth eventually gave way to changes in feature films, when "having satisfied their hunger for truth, the audiences found it to be too depressing, unless combined with some entertaining features" (216).

In the post-Soviet era, the role and subject matter of documentaries shifted. Changes in filmmaking and editing technologies meant that people who ordinarily would not have had the means to make documentaries were able to produce and even exhibit films. This is one factor that has led to a split in documentary cinema of Russia today. The first group is comprised of largely independent directors who work with small budgets to produce films about the world

around them, such as the directors involved in Kinoteatr.doc.¹²³ The second group tends to work with bigger budgets, often through a film studio. While their films may still focus on contemporary issues, they often have the means to explore topics further outside of their own realm, such as Vitalii Manskii in his film about the Dalai Lama, *Sunrise/Sunset (Rassvet/Zakat*, 2009). They also have more access to archival materials out of which to create historical films. One thing that these groups have in common, however, is that their films generally no longer focus on the broader issues related to the Stalin-era or Stalinism. Helping the nation as a whole deal with its traumatic past is not the primary mission of documentary cinema. Rather, when post-Soviet films confront issues related to this period, they tend to focus on how it affected a specific population or event, such as citizens of Leningrad during the blockade, as in Sergei Loznitsa's *Blockade (Blokada*, 2005) and Aleksandr Sokurov's *We Read the Book of the Blockade (Chitaem blokadnuiu knigu*, 2009, or the Jewish experience, in Aleksei Fedorchenko's *David* (2002), and Evgenii Tsymbal's *Red Zion (Krasnyi Sion*, 2006).

¹²³ Kinoteatr.doc is a group dedicated to so-called “real” cinema, both fiction and non-fiction. The group generally focuses on showcasing young and unknown filmmakers, and many of them work with new digital cameras and handheld technology. Some of them have become successful in larger festivals or on television, such as Valeriia Gai-Germanika, whose films have been shown at Kinotavr and Cannes. Kinoteatr.doc also incorporates an educational component in its work and has showcased films made under the tutelage of Marina Razbezhkina (Matvienko). For more information on this group see Alena Solntseva's “KINOTEATR.DOC: The First Three Years” and the kinoteatr.doc website.

This shifting focus of collective memory reflects post-Soviet changes in identity because, as Jeffrey Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy discuss, “the problem of *collective* memory thus arises in a particular time and a particular place... namely where the collective identity is no longer as obvious as it once was” (8; emphasis in the original). In the post-Soviet era, there is more of an emphasis on what Michel Foucault termed “counter-memory,” “referring to memories that differ from, and often challenge, dominant discourses.... Feminist historians, for instance, have sought to recover the repressed history of women that has been left out of ‘official’ histories” (Olick and Robbins 126). The films that deal with this particular historical era instead present smaller, more complex histories, often focusing on more personal tragedies or trauma experienced by a particular group.

As Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy remind us, “memory is framed in the present as much as in the past” (18). Using documentary cinema to study how a society that has undergone tremendous political and cultural changes in a short period of time remembers its past reveals just as much about its present. The changes represented by perestroika-era documentaries reflect a shift in control of the narrative about the past, allowing for the inclusion of a more diverse group of individual voices.

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