

**THE CELEBRIFICATION OF SOVIET CULTURE: STATE HEROES AFTER STALIN**

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Celebrity as an object of study is absent in narratives of Soviet cultural history. Contrary to the dominant interpretation of celebrity as a manifestation of market economic practices, this dissertation contends that the concept is not unique to first-world systems. Celebrities not only thrived in the second world but were supported and embraced as state resources because of their usefulness to the Soviet cultural administration. Their images attended to state needs while also fulfilling the public's desire for national heroes that embodied the spirit of socialism. Soviet culture is full of accounts of prominent personalities from various cultural spheres who rose to fame and notoriety, but these personages are depicted as "artists" or "heroes," rather than conceptualized as celebrity figures. This dissertation is an attempt to formulate a study that explores the formation of celebrity in the USSR during the years of the Thaw and early Stagnation, roughly 1953-73.

The methodology of this work positions the celebrity figure at the intersection of a number of cultural and technological platforms, primarily Soviet cinema and the state-controlled media system, and works through three principal lines of inquiry. This dissertation, first, explores the development of the celebrity network in the USSR as well as the way that Soviet fame had an international cultural presence. The project, second, examines the way that the celebrity is contextualized in the USSR in terms of his or her relationship to media and the cinema industry. The dissertation, third, situates its exploration of celebrity development between two other periods in Soviet history, Stalinism and Perestroika, while also looking ahead to the way that the development of the Thaw celebrity reappears in contemporary Russia. Finally, the project takes

as its goal the exploration of the celebrity text in renegotiating understandings of Soviet cultural history. Although the development of the second-world celebrity was, at times, inspired by first-world models, this dissertation demonstrates that it was possible to establish an evolving and thriving celebrity apparatus in the Soviet Union.

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## **PREFACE**

I would like to express appreciation to my committee members for their help with this dissertation. I owe an enormous thank you to my advisor, Vladimir Padunov, for hours of conversation, advice, and unconditional support throughout the duration of this project. I am grateful to Matthew Lilly, Bryanna Vacanti, and my parents for their encouragement. Finally, to Geer McGee: my deepest love and gratitude.

## INTRODUCTION

When Tony Curtis visited Leningrad in the 1970s, he had hopes of meeting the artist responsible for the Russian voiceover of “The Great Leslie” in the Soviet Union. Aleksandr Dem'ianenko, one of the most beloved film figures in the USSR, served as the voice double for Curtis’s handsome daredevil character in Blake Edwards’s 1965 film, *The Great Race*. Dem'ianenko was famous for his role as the nerdy student-scientist, “Shurik,” in Leonid Gaidai’s 1960s blockbuster comedies. Considering the popularity of the Shurik hero, Curtis rhetorically posed a question to his Soviet handlers: “Isn’t it true that Dem'ianenko is a very rich man” (Veligzhanina)? Curtis did not realize that Dem'ianenko’s career as a creative comedy actor was already in decline and that he was barely able to support himself as a voiceover artist. Second paragraph.

Curtis’s question reflects much of the reason that I have chosen to pursue a study of celebrity in the Soviet Union, as it gestures towards a dominant understanding of stardom and fame that presides over the way the phenomenon of celebrity is approached in scholarly discourse. Hollywood celebrities tend to provide the model for analysis across national and historical traditions, one that maintains the importance of first-world economic structures in the makeup of the celebrity image. Richard Dyer’s seminal exploration of Hollywood stars as polysemic structures represents a blueprint to which colleagues in celebrity and star studies still turn in their

contemporary work.<sup>1</sup> While it continues to be relevant, Dyer's paradigm for star and celebrity analysis is rooted in the belief that capitalism as an evolving order determines how images of celebrity figures circulate within society, and consequently excludes the possibility for celebrity to exist—much less flourish—in alternative socio-economic and political systems.<sup>2</sup>

Celebrity as an object of study is absent in narratives of Soviet cultural history despite the fact that various outgrowths of the celebrity figure—writers, musicians, film stars, cosmonauts, athletes—were the jewels of socialist life. Contrary to the dominant interpretation of celebrity as a manifestation of market economic practices, my work contends that the concept is not unique to so-called first-world systems. Celebrities not only thrived in the second world but were supported and embraced as state resources because of their usefulness to the Soviet cultural administration.

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<sup>1</sup>Dyer writes that, “From the perspective of ideology, analyses of stars—as images existing in films and other media texts—stress their structured polysemy, that is, the finite multiplicity of meanings and affects they embody and the attempt so to structure them that some meanings and affects are foregrounded and others are masked or displaced” (*Stars* 3).

<sup>2</sup>From Dyer's perspective, “Discussion of Hollywood production generally takes place between two polar views. The first considers Hollywood production as a capitalist production like any other, and in this perspective stars are to be seen in terms of their function in the economy of Hollywood, including, crucially, their role in the manipulation of Hollywood's market, the audience. At the other extreme come views that seem innocent of any consideration of Hollywood in terms of profit, and account for the star phenomenon in terms of either of some intrinsic property of the film medium or else the special magic of the stars themselves” (*Stars* 10).

Their images attended to state needs while also fulfilling the public's desire for national heroes that embodied the spirit of socialism. Soviet culture is rich in accounts of prominent personalities from artistic, intellectual, and social spheres who rose to various levels of fame and notoriety, and yet these personages are depicted as "artists" or "heroes," rather than conceptualized as celebrity figures. There is no comprehensive study to date, consequently, that explores the formation of celebrity in the former USSR, nor in the second-world context more broadly.

This dissertation, therefore, explores how celebrities were constructed in the Soviet Union, how such figures were understood and received, and the cultural purposes they served. My work, from one perspective, is a study of the Soviet experience through notions of fame that are conventionally associated with cultural values on the Western side of the former Iron Curtain. The project, from another perspective, is about the celebrity-building process within a socio-political system in which every aspect of cultural production was controlled by the state. The queries that this work poses, then, are as much about the workings—and edifices—of the Soviet cultural apparatus as they are about specific Soviet celebrities. They examine not only the way that the celebrity image was narrated and circulated within Soviet society but also, in some instances, how Soviet celebrities were perceived abroad. They consider how Soviet culture, to the extent that it can be understood anatomically as a composition of celebrity personalities, might be packaged as a certain type of socialist—or celebrity—project.

To varying degrees and during different phases of its leadership, the Soviet administration had an investment in Hollywood culture, particularly the film circuit, and Soviet citizens were curious about numerous aspects of Western and American popular culture despite the strict jurisdiction of the import of entertainment formats from abroad. The following chapters of this dissertation, at times, speak to the importance of the Hollywood celebrity effigy in Soviet star

building. However, transcribing Western celebrity theories and methodologies onto Soviet celebrity structures presents a curious problem, mainly that other “foreign” entertainment traditions were also of immense interest to audiences and to the USSR leadership. As Sudha Rajagopalan has effectively demonstrated in her study of the audience reception of Indian films, for example, the fascination with Indian cinema and its stars was made available to Soviet citizens for decades after Stalin’s death and through the fall of the Soviet state.

Despite the fact that attention to foreign stars and celebrities existed in the Soviet imagination well beyond the confines of American cinema, the Hollywood model nevertheless remains the dominant focus for readings of celebrity through individual case studies, rather than as queries about specific cultural processes or histories. Although the approach to this dissertation may, at first glance, appear as an inconceivably mammoth project, I have chosen to elucidate my research through the case-study paradigm, not because it is the preferred model in celebrity studies, but because analyses of individual celebrity figures hold clues to larger overtures about the Soviet cultural endeavor. The figures I have chosen to study are not representative of every Soviet “star”; the omission of such beloved artists and their creative avenues, like Alla Pugacheva and estrada for example, is admittedly nefarious in a study of Soviet celebrity. The goal of the dissertation, however, is not to argue for the significance of one particular figure over another, nor to provide a groundbreaking methodology for celebrity analysis. The work aims, rather, to propose a framework for examining the makeup of specific narratives and images of fame in a culture whose principles, for all intents and purposes, were antithetical to the way that we understand celebrity figures. I have made the considered decision, moreover, to concentrate on the rendering of the celebrity image as it appears in various formats of cultural activity—largely through the prisms of

film and visual culture—rather than take the anthropological turn to studies of celebrity, the approach that, at times, the Western model prefers.

While the intentions of this dissertation are to represent the Soviet cultural landscape by not privileging celebrities in one social or artistic sphere too greatly over another, the figures under examination each have their own curious relationships to the Soviet (and contemporary Russian) cinema industry. That system, in some ways, serves as a touchstone to this exploration of the Soviet celebrity apparatus and its relationship to the broader international celebrity system. While it would certainly be fruitful to trace the star-building process from the inception of the Soviet state through its collapse in 1991, this dissertation concentrates primarily on the period immediately following Stalin's death—roughly 1953 through 1973—although the scope of my queries span beyond these years as a result of some celebrities' extensive careers as well as their posthumous stardoms. My questions focus on the Thaw and the early years of Stagnation for two reasons: first, the paradigm for the Soviet celebrity, as I shall demonstrate, is refashioned after the death of Stalin and the introduction of the new Soviet political hierarchy under Nikita Khrushchev's administration. An interpretation of the shift between two very different Soviet eras through the celebrity perspective captures a provocative understanding of the figures important to such cultural ruptures.

Second, my project offsets these years as those preceding another radical rupture in Soviet culture and politics. The beginning of Perestroika signals the development of a different kind of celebrity—a matter that will be addressed in Chapter IV—a figure whose image is born in the USSR but has largely evolved in the New Russia. The Thaw, as this work will demonstrate, is unique in Soviet celebrity culture in that it marks a moment when state demands could be fulfilled simultaneously with audience desires despite the legacy of Stalinist culture and isolation from the

capitalist free market. These years reflect the waxing and waning of control over cultural politics that characterize the Thaw and both directly and indirectly produced a vibrant celebrity tradition. Stagnation also saw the prospering of heroes despite the clichéd idea that it was a time of idleness in artistic production. As Pugacheva once noted in an interview: “You can call that political period whatever you want; for a lot of people it was a time of inactivity. In my creative work, though, there was never any stagnation” (qtd. MacFadyen, *Red Stars* 260).

Rather than aiming to establish fixed principles of celebrity in capitalist versus socialist modes of production, this study approaches its examination by looking at how celebrity adapts and takes on new forms in the socialist system. It considers how celebrity functions within Soviet cultural history, laying the framework for considering the way that such personalities were narrated and imagined by the state and the public—the intentions of the celebrity text rather than those of the Soviet state. The cultural administration played a pivotal role in the establishment of a socialist celebrity tradition as the main architect in the building of the celebrity machine. This political factor, above all else, sets the Soviet celebrity apart from other Western-oriented paradigms. My work, therefore, considers the role of cultural authorities as one of the basic premises of a figure that might be called “Soviet celebrity,” while also conceding that the concept is much more opaque, as Soviet star models, at times, gesture towards aspects of Dyer’s Hollywood paradigm.

Given that studying celebrity within a socialist mode of production is already working outside traditional methodologies of celebrity studies, I wish to establish some directives for the ways that I conceive of “star” and “celebrity” as guides for the trajectory of this project. The distinction between these terms maintains a fluid, yet volatile boundary. These concepts are frequently conflated without much hesitation (often in celebrity studies) and, at the same time, the need to maintain their particularities (more so in star studies) is critical for a project about the

construction of fame in a culture in which the language for such a discussion is largely unavailable. The word “celebrity” does not exist in Russian, neither as an abstraction nor as a concrete noun. I argue, nevertheless, that “celebrity” was not “transculturally relocated” to the Soviet Union, to borrow a term from Neepa Majumdar’s innovative work on Bollywood stardom, but rather that Soviet culture practiced the celebrity-building process in a way that was compatible with the socio-political design of a socialist system and, even now, draws on a state-run model in Vladimir Putin’s Russia. In considering some of the problems presented in adapting this concept to a socialist context, I draw on a theoretical framework in Western media studies for clarity in carving out a space for the Soviet celebrity as an object of analysis. Although the project will regularly refer to both star studies and celebrity studies, I maintain a distinction for the purposes of illuminating the political and cultural significance of the personages to whom the dissertation is devoted. Overlap in the use of “star” and “celebrity” is, nevertheless, unavoidable in discussions about the unfolding of the processes and patterns of fame in the USSR.

The work of colleagues in star and celebrity studies provides several points of reference for ways to conceive of celebrity figures with regards to the Soviet experience. Although Western theorists of celebrity do not bear so-called “answers” to my queries, their work does hold custody of a certain type of touchstone with which it is necessary to engage, despite the fact that, in a sense, Soviet celebrities are encumbered by such existing discourse. This dissertation, therefore, is not reliant on the existing theoretical library, but is significantly informed by those established traditions. As part of this introduction, I shall therefore mention three aspects of studies of stardom and celebrity that are constituent to the framework through which I present my own argument in the following chapters: the mapping out of the differences between “star” and “celebrity,” the

presumed union between celebrity and capitalism as an evolving economic system, and the fundamental role of film, visual culture, and news media in the construction of fame.

Christine Geraghty takes up the distinction between “star” and “celebrity” through Dyer’s model, arguing that the paradigm for studies of “stars” has relied heavily on

an unstable and contradictory figure, constructed both intertextually (across different films) and extratextually (across different types of material). The relationship between the audience and star is deemed to be best figured by the fan whose knowledge comes from a variety of sources and who reworks the material in the interests of working through contradictory questions of identity. This emphasis on the duality of the film star and the relationship with the fan has also become established for work in popular culture more generally. In music, television, sport and beyond, the model is one of a relationship between the public sphere of performance and work and the private sphere of personal lives, of the home and personal relationships as “revealed” through the media. (99)

Star studies, as Geraghty and others maintain, demands a dialogue about the star’s private life as a counterpoise to their presence in the public sphere. Pam Cook’s work on Nicole Kidman is just one illustration of the way that star studies, in this understanding, locates the essence of stardom in the *tête-à-tête* of the star’s personal affairs. One might point, as a case in the Soviet context, to the conversations surrounding Vladimir Vysotskii’s extensive tobacco and alcohol abuse.

The term “celebrity,” on the contrary, calls to an understanding of popularity that, in Geraghty’s notion, “indicates someone whose fame rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work and who is famous for having a lifestyle. The celebrity is thus constructed through gossip, press and television reports, magazine articles and public relations” (99). Hugh Hefner, for example, is rarely acknowledged as the self-made millionaire and founder of *Playboy* magazine and more often discussed as a playboy or socialite. The reliance on the public nature of the lifestyle of the figure—much more so than his or her professional accomplishments—draws a distinction that zeroes in on the importance of the celebrity personality in Soviet life. “Stars,” in all social and artistic spheres, were the most public figures in Soviet cultural discourse and they were famous because their lifestyles were deliberately made public. These lifestyles, even so,

were crafted on the grounds of promoting a way of life percolated through socialist values and practices, the very reason that discussing famous figures as “celebrities” in the Soviet context produces a set of such captivating questions. Iurii Gagarin serves as one of the most accessible examples of this notion of celebrity. His accomplishment as the first man in space served as a vehicle for the state to command him as a representative of the values of Soviet life: science, technological achievement, and socialist progress.

Through the notion of “star-as-celebrity,” Geraghty’s work offers a way of understanding “stars” who intermingle with those from other cultural spheres—a film star dating a supermodel, a sportsman marrying a musician. She notes that, “the celebrity mode may be the most accessible way into film stardom precisely because it links together different entertainment formats,” and that, “This emphasis on the private sphere and the interaction with other forms of fame means that in the celebrity mode the films are relatively unimportant and a star can continue to command attention as a celebrity despite failures at the box office” (100-01). This could be true of Tom Cruise, for example, or at the same time one might consider him a star whose films perform well precisely because of his status as celebrity. Geraghty’s revised conception of the more “traditional” star or celebrity model will reappear later in the dissertation through the examinations of celebrity and the Soviet film industry. “In such circumstances,” Geraghty writes,

the dual nature of the star construction has diminished and the balance has shifted towards that of the celebrity where there is no work to back up the emphasis on the private life. In this construction of the celebrity, it no longer makes sense to see this circulation of information and images as subsidiary or secondary to the films or indeed to see cinema as different from other entertainment arenas. It is the audience’s access to and celebration of intimate information from a variety of texts and sources which are important here. (101)

In considering the queries of this dissertation, I define “star” to mean a celebrated individual who is talented or exceptional in a field or profession, including star politicians, but who is silhouetted through the fascination between his or her public work versus private life. I

understand “celebrity” to be a figure known for a public profile and lifestyle, whose private life is also of immense interest, but whose image yields the erasure of the boundary between the public and personal. Writing in the late 1980s about the public and private in developing media technologies, Baudrillard argues that the nature of public space is “Not a public scene or a true public space but gigantic spaces of circulation, ventilation and ephemeral connections . . . It is the same for private space. In a subtle way, this loss of public space occurs contemporaneously with the loss of private space. The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret” (56). As Leo Braudy insists,

to be talked about is to be part of a story, and to be part of a story is to be at the mercy of storytellers—the media and their audience. The famous person is thus not so much a person as a story about a person—which might be said about the social character of each one of us. Like some special aspect of ourselves, the famous person also holds out the possibility that there is another self inside, one not totally defined by that social story. In the incessant spotlight the constant tension between those stories—of the talked-of self and the unexpressed self—becomes more acute. (186)

My notion of “celebrity,” contends that it is a constructed cultural phenomenon structured around the relationship of signs between person and image, in which the person behind the celebrity sign in reality is irrelevant to his or her fictional persona.

Celebrity theorist David P. Marshall identifies the celebrity figure as symbolic of the stakes that a society has in particular cultural investments.

First, as a sign, the celebrity sheds its own subjectivity and individuality and becomes an organizing structure for conventionalized meaning. Like the sign, the celebrity *represents* something other than itself. The material reality of the celebrity sign—that is, the actual person who is at the core of the representation—disappears into a cultural formation of meaning. Celebrity signs represent personalities—more specifically, personalities that are given heightened cultural significance within the social world. (56-7; emphasis in original)

The notion of significance is also tied in the Western understanding to economic worth. Walter Benjamin described the star and celebrity phenomenon through terms of commodity: “The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the ‘spell of the personality’ the phony spell of a commodity. So long as the movie-

makers' capital sets the fashion, as a rule no other revolutionary merit can be accredited to today's film than the promotion of a revolutionary criticism of traditional concepts of art" (27). Soviet celebrities, however, emerged from a system in which all aspects of economic exchange were centralized, making them the products of the practices of their own cultural system, just as Hollywood celebrities, as Dyer and others argue, represent the manifestation of consumer capitalist culture. More contemporary celebrity scholars have developed this idea; Philip Drake and Andy Miah, for example, contend that the celebrity is "inextricably bound up with capitalist consumer culture and attempts to individualize cultural production" (54). Marshall argues that the term celebrity "describes a type of value that can be articulated through an individual and celebrated publicly as important and significant," noting that "celebrity as a concept of the individual moves effortlessly in a celebration of democratic capitalism" (4).

Insofar as we can discuss Soviet celebrity in the context of an economic system, the state controlled all aspects of the economy of celebrity. In the 1960s—when the film industry experienced a period of relatively greater creativity through the Mos'film Creative Studio, the studio was eventually shut down. This conventional aspect of celebrity criticism lends a framework that must be dismantled and reimaged for the Soviet experience.

This project also employs, albeit through a cautious vein, arguments about media culture and the celebrity figure. Charles L. Ponce de Leon argues that,

recognizing the pivotal role played by the media is the essential starting point for any analysis of celebrity. What distinguishes celebrities from the anonymous masses is visibility, a kind of visibility made possible by the media and shaped by journalistic conventions that make celebrities seem at once extraordinary and real: complex, interesting "human beings" whose unique talents and gifts are accompanied by traits that are commonplace and familiar to ordinary people. (13)

One might also consider the initiative of the star studies scholar, John Ellis, as an example of certain types of arguments that point to free-flowing media exchange as central to the celebrity structure:

It could be said that mass circulation daily and sunday [sic] newspapers tend to use stars as a kind of moral barometer, whereas fanzines push the paradoxical constitution of the star image to its limits. Mass newspapers use stars for their own ends: they can be the occasion of scandals, and they provide a repertory of figures who are in the public eye, yet have no political power. Stars provide newspapers with the vehicle for discussion of sexuality, of the domain of the personal and the familial. This is relatively absent from public political life, so the stars perform a valuable function in newspapers: they provide the dimension of the personal. This dimension is that which is inhabited by most of their readers, yet is not that of the events portrayed in the news. Stars have a soldering function: they hold the news of the personal together by being both public and intimate, by being news only in so far as they are persons. (91)

If the media is largely the architect of celebrity in the capitalist world, then such a factor complicates the way that celebrity is constructed in a socialist system. In the Soviet context the state controlled the media, making the state, one might argue, the celebrity's agent. In a capitalist mode of production, the celebrity is an object of entertainment and consumerism that, according to the studies already mentioned, influences the way that people operate in society. In a socialist context, and at times in contemporary Russia, celebrity becomes the agent rather than an object, as the celebrity figure is the force of the imagining community utilized by the state as it determines necessary and correct.

Bearing in mind this existing literature, the dissertation is organized in four chapters around what I call the *celebrification* of Soviet culture, by which I mean the process through which the state cultivated heroes in order to collapse the space between the leadership and the public. The dissertation approaches the figures under examination through various representative celebrity formats, among which include: the real-life historical figure, the unspecified historical figure, the historical figure as a character, the character as celebrity, and the actor or actress. These manifestations of celebrity are often brought together to illuminate the mechanisms behind Soviet

star texts, demonstrating that such displays of fame are rarely mutually exclusive to the process of celebrity construction. I view this bricolage of celebrity schemas not as debilitating to the queries that my research poses but rather as an indication of the complexities in attempting to define the essential features of Soviet celebrities. It is not the aim of this project to concentrate on delineating the boundaries between these formats; the dissertation, instead, embraces the asymmetrical model of the dovetailing of various celebrity narratives.

The first chapter explores how Soviet cinematic culture imagined aviators by engaging in two queries: first, how the cultural-political apparatus kindled the pilot in the domestic and international arenas; and second, how the state reacted against aviation culture in the years after Stalin's death with respect to the celebrity-building experience. While the image of the pilot demonstrated that he or she was the great leader's hero on the domestic level, the aviator could also be modeled as a celebrity pilot who served to substantiate socialist principles on the global stage. In analyzing the Soviet cultural construction of the figure of the aviator, my work explores how the pilot was cultivated as a hero for citizens at home—but also, while championing Soviet values for international audiences. Through Geraghty's notion that fame coalesces through the dissemination of various entertainment formats, I examine the ways in which celebrities may be formed through a combination of the state-controlled media, but also through other resources.

The second chapter looks at the relationship between celebrity and the Soviet film industry by exploring the career of one of the most famous film stars, Tat'iana Samoilova, who rose to celebrity status for her role in Mikhail Kalatozov's 1957 film, *The Cranes are Flying* (*Letiat zhuravli*). Samoilova is a particularly interesting figure because of the recognition she was given for her accomplishments at the Cannes Film Festival, and because of offers she received—and her own desires—to become an actress abroad. Her potential career outside of the USSR never came

to fruition due to restrictions imposed by the Soviet cultural administration. In exploring her portrayal in both the Soviet and international press, the chapter looks at the way her image was constructed for the public during the Thaw. This section of the work argues that one explanation of her fame lies in the disparity between her celebrity image as it existed on celluloid and in the press and her Hollywood career that never came to fruition. Samoilova's celebrity text, as the chapter maintains, may be examined through the notion of the transnational, or what I call the "almost transnational." This appeal to global audiences and her bygone invitation to Hollywood established a sense of loyalty to socialist culture, the notion that Soviet audiences had their "own star."

Chapter Three continues the exploration of the relationship between Soviet cinema and celebrity. The Thaw and the early years of Stagnation were years that redefined Soviet filmmaking after the death of Stalin through the exploration for new heroes and new tropes, themes, and actors who constituted a reimagining of the values represented on cinema screens. The most popular films made in the Soviet Union were created during these years and celebrities like Dem'ianenko carried a long-lasting legacy in Soviet culture. This case study examines Dem'ianenko as the character Shurik and the practices of creating the ideal socialist citizen in Soviet cinema as it relates to the question of celebrity. Rather than conceiving of celebrities through Dyer's dichotomy of the public and the private, the chapter maintains that Soviet media envisioned Dem'ianenko through the chassis of the individual and his relationship to the collective. Within this paradigm, his celebrity image appeared as the ideal socialist citizen and created a model for domestic celebrities in the USSR. As this chapter demonstrates, Soviet media advertised Dem'ianenko's image in its promotion of comedy films, underscoring that Shurik embodied Thaw-era values and the ability to re-educate the Soviet community.

The fourth chapter considers another type of celebrity hero that held particular importance to the narrative of Soviet achievement. Olympic athletes were some of the brightest stars along the vistas of cultural pride. This section of the project examines the Soviet hockey player, Valerii Kharlamov, by looking not only at his celebrity image during the years of his life but also to his star text in contemporary Russia. Kharlamov, who participated in the Olympics three times over the course of a decade, is considered to be one of the greatest champions and Soviet athletes to have ever played hockey; yet, his legacy as a celebrity athlete is almost entirely dependent on state endorsement. In 2013, the director Nikolai Lebedev made a film about the life of Kharlamov and the athlete's character was portrayed by Danila Kozlovskii, one of the most well-known Russian film celebrities in contemporary culture. Lebedev's film, *Legend No. 17 (Legenda No. 17)*, is the recipient of numerous national awards and has been publicly endorsed and praised by Putin. Chapter Four examines Kharlamov's posthumous stardom and its relationship to the Russian president's own celebrity status. Kharlamov is hailed a hero for the Soviet generation, a model for Russian youth, and represents the Russo-Soviet initiative of participating in sport on a global scale. The chapter, therefore, explores the relationship between the Soviet state and Kharlamov, the current administration's cultivation of his celebrity text, and its desire to reimagine it in contemporary Russia.

In arguing that the celebrity became a useful concept to negotiate the relationship between the state and society, my aim is for the dissertation to demonstrate that post-Stalinist cultural celebrities were meant to function as inspiration, as advertisements for Soviet progress, as the paragons of socialist values for "ordinary" citizens, as icons of Soviet pride for international audiences, and as representatives for enriching state campaigns. My intentions, however, are also to establish a place for celebrities as evolving cultural texts, as the makeup of the celebrity image

is not hard and fast, but rather a concept that is shaped by particular socio-cultural, political, and economic initiatives. The value of a study on celebrity, from the socialist perspective, is precisely this quality: state heroes could be imagined through the process of celebrification, recreating the ambitions of the Soviet state in the name of its cultural superstars.

## 1.0 FROM STAR PILOTS TO SOVIET CELEBRITIES: STALIN'S FALCONS ON THE DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL STAGE

“Pilots generally take pride in a good landing, not in getting out of the vehicle.”

—Neil Armstrong

“Flying is done largely with one’s imagination.”

—Wolfgang Langewiesche (4)

The acclaimed Soviet pilot, Valerii Chkalov, challenged history during his career in the 1930s through world record-breaking expeditions that cast him as a brave, daredevil airman and state hero. Following his 1936 flight over the Arctic Circle from Moscow to Udd Island, Chkalov gave a speech at a rally to celebrate the journey’s success:

If it weren’t for you, there would be no us. We are your comrades, workers just like you. How were we able to complete our flight? Because Great Stalin guided us. Great Stalin showed us the path! . . . To Great Stalin I want to say: all of us gathered here today will help you to fulfill all that you want and all that you desire for the good of humanity . . . This most inspirational victory belongs to Great Stalin! It is for the great navigator of our path, Comrade Stalin! Hurrah! (qtd. Palmer 227)<sup>3</sup>

Such a speech demonstrates the extent to which pilots and other heroes, during the Stalinist period, were in large part the creation of the state. Images like Chkalov’s served as the model of the New Soviet Man, the archetype for state triumph in science and technology, and the subject for heroism in popular culture. As historian Jay Bergman maintains, the Soviet aviation system and the impression of its pilots in the popular imagination differed, for example, from the

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<sup>3</sup>Originally recorded in *Slava geroiam!* (Moscow 1936), 69-70.

American tradition, insofar as achievements like Chkalov's functioned as explicit vindication of political ideology even after Stalin's death (137).

The interests of this chapter are grounded in the relationship between the figure of the pilot and the celebrity personality, as it may be understood in the Soviet context, through the ways that the cult of aviation was portrayed in Soviet cinema during High Stalinism, and in how the representation of pilots was transformed through cultural texts during the Khrushchev Thaw. In examining how Soviet films imagined aviators, this work engages two queries: first, how the cultural-political apparatus cultivated the pilot on the domestic and global stages; and second, how cinema reacted against the pathos of Stalinist aviation culture in the post-1953 years with respect to the celebrity-building process. The image of the pilot in Stalinist cinema demonstrated that he or she was the great leader's falcon and a hero on the state level. More importantly, however, the aviator could also be modeled as a celebrity pilot who served to validate the socialist way of life on the world stage. I argue that the Stalinist pilot, in this respect, was not only portrayed as a hero for citizens at home but as a champion of Soviet values for global audiences, a figure, who through the prism of celebrity construction, could be wrested from the restrictions of the socialist-realist method—as a hero not bound to Soviet artistic parameters—for the purposes of international distinction. Although this chapter engages with the narrative mythology surrounding the real-life Chkalov, it is not concerned specifically with the historical figure but, rather, with the construction of his celebrity persona in the film. The core of this section of the dissertation, therefore, examines a biopic of the pilot as a celebrity through Mikhail Kalatozov's 1941 film, *Valerii Chkalov* that, from my perspective, sets about demonstrating the importance of the celebrity figure to the fabric of Soviet culture.

## 1.1 STALIN'S FALCONS

As John McCannon's work demonstrates, the achievements of pilots during the 1930s occurred within a larger craze around aviation in the Soviet Union. The obsession with flying was, in turn, part of an even larger movement around frontier expeditions of discovery and included compatible feats such as the conquering of the Arctic. Although similar public fascinations around flying occurred in the US and the rest of Europe, as McCannon argues, the process of creating Soviet explorer-heroes was inextricably tied to state agendas and to Stalin's own interests in aviation: "he deliberately sought to cast himself in the public light not only as the 'Father of Pilots' but also as the 'Father of the Aviation Industry,' since 'Stalinist aviation' had come to represent the apex of Soviet technological progress" (*Red Arctic* 69).

The Arctic region during the 1930s was of interest and benefit to Soviet authorities for a number of reasons. Such actions could be venerated as fulfilling the Soviet goal of "taming the North and transforming its icy, hostile wastes into a bountiful, productive powerhouse" (McCannon, *Red Arctic* 5). But expeditions could be constructed in ways that demonstrated further benefits to the state: they could absorb native peoples of the North into the Soviet way of life; there was an abundance of space in the Arctic to be explored and mapped; and there were precious natural resources waiting to be tapped out of the cold wilderness.

The mania surrounding Arctic heroes and pilots, and Stalin's role in establishing that tradition, extended even further to other types of Soviet personalities of the era, most notably the Stakhanovite worker. The admiration of Stakhanovites began in 1935 with the miner, Aleksei Stakhanov, who was said to have mined fourteen times his original quota of coal in under six hours. Stakhanov was directly praised by Stalin as a tactic to promote labor and the distinguished quality of the Soviet work ethic. Like Chkalov, Stakhanov publicly thanked Stalin and credited

him for his achievements. “To him, to the great Stalin, we are all obliged for the happy life of our country, for the joyfulness and glory of our beautiful homeland” (qtd. Brooks 85).<sup>4</sup> The Stakhanovite movement was expanded to include workers in other sectors, across different types of factories, as well as agricultural laborers. These workers were not only depicted as heroes, but as celebrities and model citizens who had “the benefit,” symbolically and monetarily, of Stalin’s guidance.<sup>5</sup>

The image of the Stakhanovite, as Katerina Clark writes,

was humble in origins and education, yet his achievement in raising production norms was quite explicitly not due to sheer physical strength. The secret of his success lay in his *daring* to discount scientifically established norms. Any man who had the courage to go beyond that threshold, it was claimed, could outdo production quotas by “ten to one hundred times.” Thus the Stakhanovite stood as an emblem not only in daring and achievement but in epistemology as well. Among the many extravagant epithets coined for him, “Prometheus unbound” suggests precisely that. (*Soviet Novel* 143; emphasis in original)

As with the key to success of the public images of Stakhanovites, for pilots it was the attestation of Stalin’s involvement in their accomplishments that ensured their status as ideal citizens. Only through his direction, it was rendered, could Soviet aviators become model heroes on behalf of the socialist community.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Originally quoted in *Pravda*, November 1935.

<sup>5</sup>As Brooks notes in his discussion on Stakhanovites, “Although the economic contribution of the Stakhanovites was uncertain, the government paid them more than ordinary workers and granted a few prominent super-achievers huge salaries, cars, and other perquisites” (85).

<sup>6</sup>“The Stakhanovites in their various autobiographical writings always stressed that it was some speech by Stalin that had inspired them originally to perform their feats” (Clark, *Soviet Novel* 143).

In building the cult of heroes during the Stalinist period, Richard Stites notes the central role of aviation: “Pilots and aviators played a special role in the mythology of the 1930s . . . They embodied the leading edge of applied science . . . the frontier spirit, bravery and adventure in distant and forbidding locales, and spirited youth tempered by fatherly mentors” (69). The preoccupation with pilots in Soviet culture appears extensively through films and literary works, and pilot narratives recur repeatedly, according to Clark, for the purposes of discerning the “spontaneity/consciousness dialectic.” She writes that in socialist-realist fictional narratives, the more traction a character gains in placing less importance on his personal identity and interests (spontaneity) in favor of the collective social identity (consciousness), the more “positive” an example he represents for others in the socialist community (15-16).<sup>7</sup> Films like Aleksandr Dovzhenko’s *Aerograd* (1935), Eduard Pentslin’s *The Fighter Pilots (Istrebiteli)*, 1939), or Iulii Raizman’s 1935 work, *The Pilots (Letchiki)* provide examples of the ways in which the pilot served

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<sup>7</sup>“The subtext that shapes the master plot is another fundamental idea of Marxism-Leninism, one that is a somewhat déclassé and more abstract version of the class-struggle account of history. In this version, historical progress occurs not by resolving class conflict but through the working-out of the so-called spontaneity/consciousness dialectic. In this dialectical model, ‘consciousness’ is taken to mean actions or political activities that are controlled, disciplined, and guided by politically aware bodies. ‘Spontaneity,’ on the other hand, means actions that are not guided by complete political awareness and are either sporadic, uncoordinated, even anarchic (such as wildcat strikes, mass uprisings, etc.), or can be attributed to the workings of vast impersonal historical forces rather than to deliberate actions” (15).

as a hero for the socialist-realist method.<sup>8</sup> As Lilya Kaganovsky discusses at length in *How the Soviet Man was Unmade*, the pilot appears as a paradox: among numerous heroes, the aviator distinguished himself through mutilation of the body. Such a physical sacrifice served as a reminder that he was limited—in flight and in status—that the greatest hero of Soviet culture could only be one man: Stalin.

In Raizman's *The Pilots*, for example, the hero, as well as his status and prestige, is bound to the Soviet Union and must be tamed by the state through emasculation of the male body. The younger pilot, Sergei Beliaev (Ivan Koval'-Samborskii), imagines flying abroad, but is told by an older mechanic that he is merely bored, like Evgenii Onegin. Beliaev takes off on a test flight without permission and after his plane crashes, he is punished by being grounded, as well as through the physical injuries he endures. The much older pilot, Rogachev (Boris Shchukin), sustains injuries from a heart condition that leaves him bedridden, also unable to take to the air.

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<sup>8</sup>I follow the definition of socialist realism as it was outlined in *Literaturnaia gazeta* in 1934: “the fundamental method of Soviet literature and literary criticism, demands of the artist a truthful, historically concrete depiction of reality in its revolutionary development. The truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic depiction must be combined with the ideological remolding and reeducation of the working people in the spirit of socialism” (3 September 1934).

Rogachev is even confined to the building's boundaries—the roof—as he scans the sky for his airplane flying under the command of aviation authorities (Figure 1).

With respect to the representation of land in cinema, Emma Widdis argues that during the Stalinist period, Soviet space was known, bounded, and mapped. As she explains, “The creation of a coherent ‘imaginary geography’ for the enormous *neob'iatnyi prostor* (boundless space) of the Soviet Union was a vital task for the new regime, marking the boundaries of power. Drawing the map—real and imaginary—of the new territory was a process of social and political consolidation” (3). Pilots of socialist-realist films, as such analysis indicates, cannot rise above their positions as “domestic” figures precisely because they are constructed for the purpose of elevating Stalin. Their “boundedness,” therefore, prevents them from being lifted above and beyond Soviet borders both in flight and in distinction.



**Figure 1: Screenshot from Iulii Raizman's *The Pilots* (1935), taken by author**

As the following section demonstrates, however, not all hero pilots were shackled to the boundaries of Soviet space, as Kalatozov's *Valerii Chkalov* depicts an exception in the portrayal

of Soviet airmen. Kaganovsky understands the *Chkalov* film through the socialist-realist method. *Chkalov*, she writes, demonstrates “the myth of an unruly and undisciplined subject brought to earth by the forces and constraints of Soviet power” (94). Although she notes that “it is possible to read the opening of Kalatozov’s film as Chkalov’s threat to Soviet power,” Kaganovsky also argues that “though his story is ultimately one of Soviet triumph, at its inception can be found the anxiety over the too-successful and inadequately disciplined Soviet subject” (94-5). The mythology surrounding the Chkalov figure for Clark represents the spontaneity/consciousness dialectic that makes it possible for the pilot to achieve distinction (125-9). Such readings correspond with the interests of the socialist-realist canon, but as opposed to other narratives about Soviet pilots during the 1930s and 1940s, Chkalov is a figure for Kalatozov, I argue, who is the apogee of Stalin’s guidance, but ultimately defies socialist realism, global ideological differences, and whose achievements usurp the narrative of national hero by recasting him as the object of international fame.

## 1.2 KALATOZOV’S VALERII CHKALOV

The real Chkalov was constructed as a celebrity pilot in Soviet culture and lauded as one of the greatest contemporary Soviet heroes and role models. His tragic death in 1938, the result of an experimental flight gone awry, drew more than a million mourners to the Hall of Columns in Moscow before his body was cremated and its remains placed in a Kremlin wall for preservation (*Kremlevskie pokhorony*). The pilot’s reputation as a young aviator lent itself to admonition from the state for the perilous—as well as unauthorized—nature of his behavior: gliding under low telegraph wires, performing aerial stunts over Red Square on the anniversary of the October

Revolution, as well as his most famous stunt of flying under the Troitskii Bridge in Leningrad. Chkalov achieved his first great feat when he completed the 1936 flight along with his co-pilot Georgii Baidukov and their navigator Aleksandr Beliakov. Just a year later the trio flew the same plane from Moscow across the North Pole to the United States. In their journey, they broke two records: one for nonstop long-distance flying and another for the first transpolar flight from Eurasia to America (McCannon, "Positive Heroes" 346). When they landed their plane in Vancouver, Washington they were greeted enthusiastically by US citizens and officials.

Amidst the attention given to explorers and aviators, Scott W. Palmer attempts to cast Chkalov as a Soviet celebrity, highlighting his famed status as the USSR's "consummate success story" (236). Soviet depictions of popular figures, nevertheless, prefer, rather, the term, "hero." The concept of "hero" in Soviet culture, particularly with respect to Chkalov, is interesting given his canonization in Soviet aviation mythology.<sup>9</sup> "Hero," etymologically, is associated with one who values "honour and glory above life itself and dies on the battlefield in the prime of life," or who has been ossified as a cult hero after his death, due to the unusual manner in which he died or as the result of his power among the living (Finkelberg 1). "The Greek word 'hero' moreover, can designate either people of the remote past who lived up to the time of the Trojan War and whose

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<sup>9</sup>Ponce de Leon's study of the emergence of celebrity in the US consistently references the historian Daniel Boorstin's remarks about the celebrity figure; interestingly, he points to the transition from "hero" to "celebrity" through the case of an American pilot: "when an authentic hero—Boorstin's example was Charles Lindbergh—appeared on the scene, he was inexorably drawn into the maw of celebrity-making machinery and reduced to the trivialized stature of less deserving figures" (13).

deeds are celebrated in the epic songs, or people who became the object of cult after their deaths; the latter category also includes those who lived in historical times” (12). The term, “celebrity,” in contradistinction, comes from Latin origins and springs from the verb “to celebrate,” as well as the noun “he who is well-known,” from the French notion, “célèbre.” Around the mid-nineteenth century it began to be used to describe the condition of fame as distinct from a “hero” or “star,” meaning a person of talent and achievement (Drake and Miah 50-1).

Chkalov’s personality was an ideal subject for cinema, as a film about the aviator had potential to demonstrate the social power of the celebrity, and as Iurii Bogomolov argues, the film reflects Kalatozov’s interests in the romantic and epic nature of the hero (93-118). Events from the pilot’s actual life could establish that the celebrity figure had the ability to represent a bridge between the state and the people, but also between the Soviet Union and the United States. The director, regarding his work on the film, wrote that he and his crew enlisted help from people who knew Chkalov personally, in order to adequately construct his image and personality for the screen (“Kak my rabotali” 313). Kalatozov, in the same article, noted that,

Приходилось отбирать лишь наиболее значительные, наиболее важные факты, стремясь при этом передать внутреннюю цельность стремительной жизни Чкалова. Нужно было воссоздать образ, необычайно широкий, отразивший лучшие черты русского народа и одновременно неповторимый в своем своеобразии. При этом мы знали, что нас ждет ревнивый и строгий контроль народа, который хорошо помнит и любит своего героя.<sup>10</sup> (“Kak my rabotali” 312)

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<sup>10</sup>“It was necessary to choose only the most significant, the most important facts, to convey the inner integrity of Chkalov’s quick life. It was necessary to recreate his unusually vast image, reflecting the best traits of the Russian people, and at the same time remaining unique in his own image. At the same time, we knew we would have to face the severe test of the nation, which loves and remembers its hero well” (translation mine).

His film accomplishes this by constructing Chkalov as a pilot who succeeds through Stalin's guidance, and who collapses the space between the state and the Soviet public, as well as the world's two major sociopolitical ideologies.

Kalatozov had a rich career in the film industry beginning in the 1920s; his first independent work as a director was the controversial 1930 silent documentary, *Salt for Svanetia* (*Sol' Svanetii*), before falling into trouble with authorities for *A Nail in the Boot* (*Gvozd' v sapoge*, 1932).<sup>11</sup> Prior to directing the films for which he is most known—among them his 1957 melodrama, *The Cranes Are Flying* (*Letiat zhuravli*) the director made films that were much “friendlier” to state policy, including experimenting with the theme of aviation in his 1939 work, *Courage* (*Muzhestvo*), which tells the story of a Soviet airman who is forced to land near the Afghan border and who outwits his captors.

Kalatozov also went on to become a film politician and administrative leader as a member of the Communist Party, and from 1939 the chief administrator of Soviet feature-film production. The director spent roughly a year and a half in Los Angeles as the representative for the Committee for Cinema Affairs of the USSR Council of People's Commissars during World War II (1943-45).<sup>12</sup> It is Kalatozov's time in the United States that is of primary interest here, as after he returned

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<sup>11</sup>See Anemone's article for an interesting account of the cultural and political situation surrounding Kalatozov and the film at the time.

<sup>12</sup>Kalatozov continued to be concerned, later in his career, with Soviet international film relations in *The Red Tent* (*Krasnaia palatka*, 1969), a work about Arctic exploration. It featured an acclaimed cast, was shot both in the Soviet Union and in Rome, and employed Kalatozov's talent for dealing with an international production and crew.

to the Soviet Union he published a small book, *The Face of Hollywood (Litso Gollivuda)*, which documents his travels, impressions, and analysis of the US feature film industry. Kalatozov also wrote letters home during his time in the US that document the progression of his visit and his attitude towards the Hollywood system. As Sergei Kapterev writes, “Kalatozov’s dispatches from Hollywood are a mix of expert curiosity and ideological righteousness, an authentic representation of that fascinating balance within Soviet attitudes toward American cinema and the US film industry that emerged during World War II” (“Illusionary Spoils” 785). Soviet authorities needed Kalatozov’s expertise in order to make known their wishes for developing a relationship with the US, in part for the war effort. Such an initiative ascribes new significance to Kalatozov’s time in the United States, as well as to the *Chkalov* film and the celebrity pilot.

One of Kalatozov’s purposes in the States was to set up an exchange system for Soviet and US films, as well as to establish Soviet presence in the industry. The director was responsible for selecting US films for Soviet audiences. “On 10 April 1944, Kalatozov advised the Soviet Embassy in Washington, DC, that the ‘American film industry, like all American industry, was extremely anxious about postwar perspectives,’ and that in his meetings with its heads, ‘each of them raised the question of whether the USSR was ready to open its market to American films” (Kapterev, “Illusionary Spoils” 785). Kalatozov told *Time* that he screened over 100 films and some of them had been sent back to the USSR. The campaign in the article described Kalatozov’s mission for film exchange to send 40 US films per year back to the Soviet Union, while also attempting to expand Soviet distribution of films in Hollywood (Robinson 143).

Kalatozov, moreover, had the responsibility of investigating the US film industry for the benefit of Soviet authorities. “Under the pretext of selecting films for import to the USSR, Kalatozov procured films for his superiors in Moscow, without paying anything to their makers .

. . . Another complaint about Kalatozov's behavior was presented by a filmmaker who offered more propaganda potential for the Soviets than a relationship with the notoriously tough and vulgar Hollywood mogul (Columbia Pictures President Harry Cohn)" (Kapterev, "Illusionary Spoils 786). The film about which Cohn was angry was a damaged print, ironically, of a biopic of Frederic Chopin, *A Song to Remember* (1944).

The director, furthermore, was particularly curious about the influence of the Hollywood film star. Kalatozov's interests are evident, first, from his letters home to the Soviet Union, and second from his book, in which he devotes an entire chapter to observations on the subject. Although his mission was to become familiar with all facets of the US film industry, he had already underscored the importance of a Soviet relationship with the United States in *Valerii Chkalov* two years earlier. The significance of the partnership, therefore, in one sense predates Kalatozov's research in the US: *Chkalov* represented the weight such figures carried in establishing and nurturing connections. Just as Kalatozov's "wartime sojourn in the center of the American film industry symbolized, among other things, a temporary symbiotic relationship between the Soviet political establishment and the Soviet film community in regard to American film culture" (Kapterev, "Illusionary Spoils" 785), the film reflects the importance—and usefulness—of the celebrity for the Soviet state, as well as the necessity to cultivate US diplomatic relations through cinema.

Kalatozov was aware of the influence of film stars in Hollywood, as well as the ways in which cinema and celebrity figures could foster a stronger relationship between the USSR and the US. In a letter from 1 November 1943, he wrote that in the US nothing is as authoritative as the performances of stars, not even a speech by the president. "Сейчас для популяризации нашего кино устраиваем радио-кино переключку Москва—Голливуд. Это должно иметь очень

положительный результат, ибо в Америке ничто так не авторитетно, как выступление звезд, даже более чем выступление президента, его слушают далеко не все, но когда выступает Бетти Гребл, Америка, замирая, слушает и умиляется” (qtd. Kapterev, “Seks” 204).<sup>13</sup>

Kalatozov later expands on this preoccupation in *The Face of Hollywood*.

Как же создается живая «звезда» в Голливуде? В Америке существует настоящий культ «звезд». Целая армия журналистов, «ученых знатоков красоты», художников, фотографов, композиторов «изучает», обсуждает, воспевают «секреты очарования» «звезд». Есть «звезды», объявленные монополистами «разреза глаз», «сексуальной прически», манеры «зажигать искру страсти» и т. д. Чтобы иметь шанс выдвинуться, американский киноактер должен обладать привлекательной внешностью и тем, что в Голливуде называют «обаятельностью» и «персоналити» . . . “Персоналити” и “обаятельность” основные качества, необходимые каждому актеру или актрисе, претендующим именоваться «звездой» . . . В Голливуде работает до двадцати четырех тысяч актеров и статистов. Среди них сорок—пятьдесят—«звезды». Актеров класса «А», играющих первые и вторые роли и составляющих основную группу исполнителей фильма, —двести пятьдесят—триста. Кроме того, существуют актеры категории «В» и «С» и, наконец,—статисты. Из двадцатичетырехтысячной массы исполнителей каждый год в «звезды» протискиваются два-три человека. (52-56)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>“For the popularization of our cinema at the moment we are constructing a roll call over radio and film, Moscow to Hollywood. It should produce a very positive effect, as in America nothing is as authoritative as the appearance of stars, not even a speech by the president, not everyone listens to him, but when Betty Grable speaks, America pauses, listens, and swoons” (translation mine).

<sup>14</sup>“How is the living ‘star’ created in Hollywood? In America there is a real cult of ‘stars.’ A whole army of journalists, ‘scientific experts on beauty,’ artists, photographers, composers ‘study,’ discuss, sing praises to the ‘secrets of charm’ of the ‘stars.’ There are ‘stars’ that have been decreed to have a monopoly on ‘the shape of eyes,’ on ‘sexy hairdos,’ and on their manner of ‘igniting the spark of passion,’ etc. In order to have a chance to become known, an American actor should have an attractive appearance and that which they call in Hollywood ‘charm’ and

Although Kalatozov's experience in Hollywood began two years after the release of *Chkalov*, the film demonstrates the director's interest in the process of constructing the celebrity personality, as his book later reflects. While it presents a negative depiction of the process by which Kalatozov observed that actors become famous in the industry, his pessimism about the US film system reveals another reason why the representation of the celebrity-building process in *Chkalov* was so important. If Kalatozov saw the process of celebrity building in the United States as insignificant and shallow, then celebrification in the USSR reflected the construction of more authentic heroes, orchestrated primarily through Stalin and the superiority of Soviet ideology. Chkalov's status as a star pilot in the film reflected that in order to become a Soviet superman ordained by the state, one also had to become an international celebrity.

To recall Geraghty's understanding of celebrity:

The term celebrity indicates someone whose fame rests overwhelmingly on what happens outside the sphere of their work and who is famous for having a lifestyle. The celebrity is thus constructed through gossip, press and television reports, magazine articles and public relations . . . Celebrities may be contrasted to "professionals." These are people whose fame rests on their work in such a way that there is very little sense of a private life and the emphasis is on the seamlessness of the public persona . . . the most accessible way into film stardom precisely because it links together different entertainment formats—magazines, videos, photography, film. (99-101)

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'personality.' . . . 'Personality' and 'charm' are the main qualities necessary for every actor or actress who wants to be called a 'star.' Up to twenty four thousand actors and extras work in Hollywood. Among them, about forty or fifty are 'stars.' There are about 250-300 'A' class actors who play leading and supporting roles and compose the core group of performers in a film. Besides that, there are actors of 'B' class and 'C' class and finally—extras. Out of the crowd of twenty-four thousand performers, each year only two or three people elbow their way to 'stardom'" (translation mine).

Geraghty's perspective offers the notion that celebrities may be formed outside of capitalist sociopolitical systems, through outlets aside from state-controlled media. Her analysis lends itself to one way that the celebrity became a useful concept to negotiate the relationship between the state and society in how Soviet culture celebrated Chkalov. Kalatozov depicts the aviator as a famous hero by visually tracing the process of celebrity construction, reflecting the director's awareness of the power of such a personality, as Chkalov's image in the film is established through the appearance of various media formats. The film, in using this approach, creates a space for the pilot to break through the bounded nature of the socialist-realist method and become a figure who succeeds through Stalin's guidance, but also as a hero for the global community.

Kalatozov achieves this narrative by depicting details of the pilot's actual life and career in order to realize the transformation from star to celebrity, as well as elements of the celebrity building process, like state-sponsored—as well as international—media attention, and the pilot's personal relationship with Stalin. Chkalov's disposition is based on his actual reputation as a risk-taking stuntman, first portrayed through his flight under the Troitskii Bridge (Figure 2). This moment in the film is attributed to the daredevil's misinterpretation of the meeting that his commander (Boris Zhukovskii) arranges with the girl, Ol'ga (Kseniia Tarasova) whom Chkalov (Vladimir Belokurov) fancies. Although the meeting is arranged in order to help Chkalov and to convince the girl to marry him, the pilot's risky flight is portrayed as the result of the commander's provocation. Ol'ga is initially defiant about marrying him. After he successfully flies under the bridge, however, a crowd gathers at its edge in awe of the airman's trick. Only at that moment does Ol'ga, awestruck herself, confidently concede to marry him.



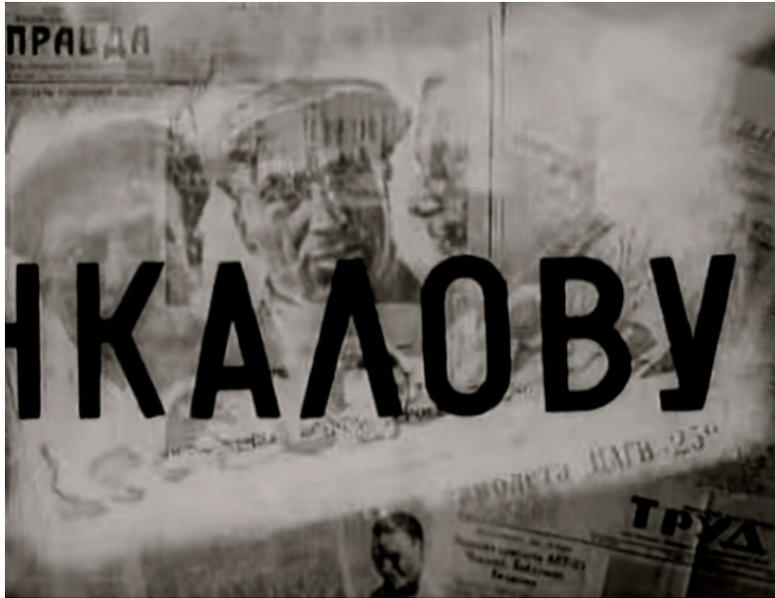
**Figure 2: Screenshot from Mikhail Kalaztozov's *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), taken by author; Chkalov flies under the Troitskii Bridge**

The “taming” of Chkalov occurs relatively early on when Stalin (Mikhail Gelovani) steps in to fulfill his role as the pilot’s mentor. At an aerial exhibition, Chkalov refuses to eject himself from his plane after the landing gear gets stuck during release. Once he lands, a crowd of fellow pilots heralds him as their leader and hero. Stalin soon walks onto the airfield in order to greet Chkalov personally and discuss his career. The leader makes him promise to stop putting himself in danger so that he can become a great career pilot and representative of the Soviet Union, telling him that his life is what is important, not the plane (Figure 3). Chkalov agrees to reform his aerial antics, and at this point in the film he begins the transformation from an accomplished star stuntman into a real pilot.



**Figure 3: Screenshot from Mikhail Kalaztozov's *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), taken by author; Stalin talks to Chkalov**

It is Chkalov's longer flights, moreover, that are portrayed as international media sensations. The flight from Moscow to Udd Island is narrated on a map of the world through a sketch in which his route appears to be traced through real time. Kalatozov chronicles the landing and public recognition of the pilot and his crew by marking this moment as the shift from Chkalov as star pilot to cultural celebrity, by focusing on the extensive coverage that the flight received in the Soviet and international press. The landing itself is achieved through a sequence of quick flashes across the screen featuring numerous newspaper and periodical clippings, with stories of the actual Chkalov splashed across the front pages (Figure 4).



**Figure 4: Screenshot from Mikhail Kalaztozov's *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), taken by author; Chkalov dominates the press**

As the portraits of the pilot and news clips slide across the foreground, the background features a welcome parade for the pilot and his crew, followed by a frame featuring a telegram from Stalin and four other Soviet officials. The scene ends with a smiling portrait of Chkalov, Baidukov, and Beliakov fixed on the screen as new Soviet role models.

Kalatozov solidifies the representation of Stalin's role in Chkalov's progression to celebrity when the pilot visits Stalin in the Kremlin just prior to embarking on his second major endeavor, the flight over the North Pole. While discussing the journey, the scene ends with a shot that foregrounds Chkalov and Stalin side by side, as a globe emerges between them from the background, suggesting not only the magnitude and significance of the pilot's undertaking, but that Chkalov will be granted permission to defy the physical and spatial boundaries previously imposed on pilots in cinema (Figure 5). It indicates that his journey will have an effect on the entire world, while also underscoring the Soviet Union's—and therefore Stalin's—pivotal role in Chkalov's flight. He cannot embark, nor can he journey beyond the borders of the Soviet map

without Stalin's permission, and he cannot accomplish such a feat without the help of the father of Soviet nations.



**Figure 5: Screenshot from Mikhail Kalaztozov's *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), taken by author; Chkalov meets Stalin in the Kremlin**

The flight across the North Pole to the United States is depicted as the conquering of nature and the pinnacle of Soviet achievement. In contrast to the flight to Udd Island, Kalatozov presents the trip across the Pole as a struggle within the plane itself. The viewer is absorbed into the journey through the sound of the plane's engine and close-up shots of the pilots at the plane's controls. As the men land in the United States, a hoard of Americans storms the airbase where the three airmen emerge clean, rested, and smiling for the world to see the achievements of Soviet aviation (Figure 6). Crowds of fans and journalists flood the tarmac and shower the men with gifts and praise. One US representative asks for a statement from Chkalov. The trio climbs on top of the plane to address the whistling, screaming crowds. Chkalov himself quiets the noise, remarking that, “На крыльях вот этого самолета, через холод, разделяющий нас, мы пронесли привет от многомиллионного нашего народа великому американскому народу” (Kalatozov, *Montazhnye*

listy).<sup>15</sup> Chkalov signs autographs as the crowd decorates him with a wreath. Women are featured clasping his portrait, thanking him, a gesture audible among the noise.



**Figure 6: Screenshot from Mikhail Kalaztozov’s *Valerii Chkalov* (1941), taken by author; Chkalov lands in Washington**

In his work on media power and its hidden dimensions, Nick Couldry discusses how the language of media texts confirms the division between the celebrity and the ordinary person, and that hierarchies exist in the media in various forms. Regarding the Soviet celebrity, while international journalism appeared in *Chkalov* as a free-flowing exchange between media and celebrity subject, the visual representations of the pilot also acted as a platform to showcase Stalin’s role in the formation of the celebrity figure. Couldry elaborates by noting that, “the media/ordinary distinction implies a difference in kind between *worlds*: between the ‘world’ of the media (everything involved in it: stories, studios, work practices) and the ‘world’ of ‘ordinary

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<sup>15</sup>“On the wings of this plane, through the cold dividing us, we’ve brought greetings from the many millions of our people to the great American people.”

life'” (354; emphasis in original). The media world in the film, while underscoring Stalin's role in Chkalov's success, also creates its own space—outside of socialist-realist boundaries—for the celebrity figure to break through the borders of Soviet culture to achieve global acclaim. The media represents the cultural domain that is larger than life, the world in which Chkalov circulates as a celebrity text, while in the regular world he remains a domestic hero.

Chkalov's homecoming to the Soviet Union is portrayed as an even grander affair, depicted through thousands of people lined along Moscow's streets for parades and tributes. “Сталин на экране в ряду преданных почитателей романтической натуры Чкалова, то есть, разумеется, во главе этого длинного многомиллионного ряда” (Bogomolov 108).<sup>16</sup> Amidst the multitude of people, the visibility of Stalin's portrait indicates, once again, that Soviet achievement has been reached at the hand of its leader. The penultimate scene of the film features Chkalov giving a speech in Red Square, where the Soviet flag flies behind him, and in which the entire screen is filled by people waiting to hear his words. Chkalov is featured giving his speech, as he attributes the success of his team to the great men of Russia and the Soviet Union.

This moment invites the understanding of how the relationship between pilots and the state operated during the Stalinist era. Through the notion of “the economy of the gift,” Stalin, as supreme leader of the USSR, could determine who was worthy of merit, special prizes, and exceptional privileges in Soviet society. In exchange for awards, those who received recognition became indebted to the leader and to the state. Such ties were portrayed and reinforced by the

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<sup>16</sup>“Stalin is side by side on screen with the admirers of Chkalov's romantic nature, that is of course, at the head of this long line of many millions of admirers” (translation mine).

state-controlled media, which underscored the rationale of behavior and performance. As Palmer observes, “great champions might defy time, science, and human endurance, but none of their accomplishments could constitute full repayment for the benefits they had received” (83). Such an exchange also played out through other modes of delivery on display in the public sphere. Just as resources like monetary prizes functioned as moral transactions, “performers who publicly thanked Stalin validated personal ties to the leader” (84). As Chkalov’s speech above demonstrates, Kalatozov underscored that Stalin officially controlled the great accomplishments of Soviet culture, while also taking into account the power of the media.

In *Heavenly Bodies*, Dyer argues that one must understand the construction of fame through the perspective of ideological and historical contexts and through intertextual analyses of famous personalities (3). For Kalatozov, Chkalov was the product not only of a domestic process, but of an international one that combined different world views and media systems. The celebrity pilot could crack the borders of the Soviet frontier while also continuing to exist under the auspices of Stalin’s protection and patronage.

The transformation of Chkalov in the film suggests that Kalatozov viewed the celebrity figure as serving multiple functions in Soviet society. It, first, underscored the way that Stalin played a pivotal role in the construction of cultural celebrities. Celebrities like Chkalov highlighted the responsibility that Stalin and the state played among the Soviet people, as they illustrated that through Stalin all challenges and achievements were possible. The erasure of the boundary between the celebrity’s public and personal life represented through the media frenzy creates a sense of achievement that is directly linked to Stalin, but that is also pleasing to, and coveted by, the public. Stalin’s appearance on the airfield in the film, for example, occurs before

a crowd of other Soviet workers, demonstrating the function that Chkalov's initial stardom served for state campaigns.

The film, second, portrays the ways that Kalatozov recognized the importance of the celebrity as a cultural figure and the weight that it could carry not just within the USSR, but on an international scale. Portraying Chkalov's fame outside the parameters of Soviet borders underscores the fundamental value of the celebrity figure for Soviet authorities. Chkalov could function as a hero for the Soviet people and, at the same time, as a representative in diplomatic relations between the USSR and the West, and in the eyes of the third world countries, particularly on the eve of the Second World War. With a celebrity who could transcend continents, ideologies, and cultural differences, the Soviet Union, too, could foster better relations with cultural industries like Hollywood in the West.

The state-sponsored spectacle of the real Chkalov's success continued after his record-breaking achievements, as the pilot published an article, "Our Father," not long after his flight to the US.

He is our father. The aviators of the Soviet Union call Soviet aviation, Stalinist aviation. He teaches us, nurtures us, warns us about risks like children who are close to his heart; he puts us on the right path, takes joy in our successes. We Soviet pilots feel his loving, attentive, fatherly eyes on us every day. He is our father. Proud parents find affectionate, heartfelt, encouraging words for each of their sons. Stalin has dubbed his aviators "falcons." He sends his falcons into flight and wherever they wander keeps track of them and when they return he presses them close to his loving heart. (qtd. Bailes 61)<sup>17</sup>

After the death of Chkalov at the end of 1938, the tribute to the pilot, just like his celebrity personality, was constructed as a state-sponsored spectacle, as Stalin himself participated in his funeral as a pallbearer. Although Kalatozov's film does not portray Chkalov's death, the pilot's funeral immortalized him as representative of a moment during which the needs of the state and

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<sup>17</sup>Originally recorded in *Letchik nashego vremeni* (Moscow 1938), 315.

Stalin also fulfilled the desires of the Soviet people. In showcasing the creation of the celebrity personality, Kalatozov was able to accomplish the reimagining of a Soviet hero on the scale of international fame, a cultural figure that could function as cinema star, articulator of ideology, the model of socialist-realist principles who also carried the cultural weight to be lifted from their limitations.

### 1.3 PILOTS OF THE THAW

The legacy of Stalin in Soviet cinema is often contextualized in terms of two observations, first through the emergence of melodrama as the dominant genre of Thaw-era films. In Soviet filmmakers' efforts to grapple with the post-war years and the leader's death, their works focused on the reconstruction of broken families and the loss of the great leader. Cinema of the period saw a shift from the Stalinist vertical family structure to a search for the reconstitution of the nuclear family. As opposed to high Stalinist films of the late 1940s and early 1950s, in which the family was constructed around Stalin as symbolic Father, the Thaw focused on a different kind of model of the family structure. Cinema launched, instead, a search for identity that concentrated on rebuilding the family in the home. If High-Stalinist films sought an on-screen utopia with Stalin as the center of the *bol'shaia sem'ia* (the big family), then melodramas of the Thaw explored the war's crippling aftermath through narratives of the individual's love and loss.

The hero of Thaw cinema, second, also experienced a transformation. As opposed to Stalin—liberator and patriarch—the post-Stalinist period often searched for heroes in the form of youth, who were free and innocent of Stalinist politics, and returning soldier heroes. The young

children that appeared on screen in many Thaw melodramas were removed from the experience or memories of the war, but were also inadvertently its victims.<sup>18</sup> As Alexander Prokhorov writes,

Lack of the father and the quest for the ideal associated with his name are a recurring motif in Thaw films. Fathers are absent usually because they perished during the Great Patriotic War, and their heroic deaths in combat partially explain their sons' troubled childhood, criminal behavior, and resultant prison experience . . . Unable to address directly the theme of Stalinist camps, where their own fathers had disappeared, many Thaw cinema filmmakers and scriptwriters invoked it indirectly by connecting the prison, crime, or war themes with the theme of fatherlessness. ("The Myth" 30)

Fatherlessness on the state level, as well as in the home, also reflected that Stalin's aviators were left without the head of their own imagined family structure, as pilots on screen were also reconceptualized through the prism of these socio-cultural concerns. As the two cinematic examples with which this section engages demonstrate, the loss of Stalin also ushered in a more compatible way for Thaw cinema to engage with the cult of aviation in films. In Grigorii Chukhrai's *Clear Skies* (*Chistoe nebo*, 1961) the portrayal of the pilot, through the perspective of Soviet domestic culture, cycles through the death of Stalin, while in Larisa Shepit'ko's 1966 film,

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<sup>18</sup>While not necessarily the most typical film for the Thaw period as a whole, Andrei Tarkovskii's *Ivan's Childhood* (*Ivanovo detstvo*, 1962), for example, nevertheless most expressively explored this theme through the young boy, Ivan (Nikolai Burliaev). The film distorts the innocence of the child by portraying the war's role in his shift from boyhood to manhood, or the worlds in which he lives: make believe and reality. Ivan's innocence becomes corrupted by the desire for retribution for the death of his family.

*Wings (Krylia)*, the pilot becomes a museum artifact, a figure of celebrations of the past rather than the present.<sup>19</sup>

Writing about his work, Grigorii Chukhrai noted that,

В этом новом сюжете воплотилось то, о чем напряженно думалось в те годы. Мое поколение бесконечно верило Сталину. Все лучшее, что было в нас, было связано с нашими коммунистическими идеалами, с нашей борьбой за коммунизм. Сталин, возглавлявший эту борьбу, представлялся нам человеком кристально честным и справедливым. Разочарование в нем было для нас страшным ударом. И все таки этот удар не поколебал нашей веры. Мы попрежнему остались верны нашим идеалам и готовы были продолжать за них борьбу.<sup>20</sup> (142)

Chukhrai himself was a war veteran who, in the mid-1960s, was responsible for the opening of the Moscow Experimental Studio, which this dissertation will examine in more depth in Chapter Three. In contrast to Kalatozov's film, Chukhrai concentrates on the narrative of the pilot hero in order to construct Aleksei Astakhov as a domestic celebrity who suffers bodily injuries like pilots from socialist-realist texts, but whose reputation reveals the valiances of Stalinist politics and rhetoric, rather than underscores the positive role of Stalin in aviation practices. Whereas the pilot

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<sup>19</sup>Kalatozov's film also had a second version, realized in the early 1960s, that excluded all scenes featuring Stalin (Bogomolov 108).

<sup>20</sup>“This new plot embodied what was difficult to dwell on in those years. My generation infinitely believed in Stalin. All of the best things in us were connected with our communist ideals, with our struggle for communism. Stalin, who was at the head of this struggle, seemed to us to be a man who was crystal-honest and just. Disillusionment with him was, for us, a terrible blow. And yet this blow did not shake our faith. We still remained faithful to our ideals and were ready to continue fighting for them” (translation mine).

for Kalatozov was an international celebrity who demonstrated the greatness of the Soviet state by defying socio-political boundaries, Chukhrai's pilot is a domestic hero whose career and reputation is directly contingent on the changing cultural landscape and political system as it is presented in the film.

*Chistoe nebo* introduces Astakhov when he appears unannounced at a New Year's party that is hosted by Liusia (Natal'ia Kuz'mina) and her younger sister, Sasha (Nina Drobysheva). Liusia serves as a stand-in mother figure for Sasha, as their mother is deceased and they have only their father to raise them. Sasha is much younger than the rest of the guests, and her behavior reflects this as she dances and twirls around, trying on the masquerade wear that one of the guests brings as a costume. When the doorbell rings and Astakhov enters, everyone is surprised at the arrival of such a handsome stranger. Liusia's negative reaction forces Astakhov to leave, while Sasha begs for her not to turn him away. Before departing, Astakhov hands Sasha a small bouquet of flowers to which she clings and keeps long after his departure. Sasha becomes very upset at Astakhov's forced exit, asking Liusia if she knows who he is: "That was Astakhov, the famous pilot!" she exclaims. "I saw his photo in a magazine!" Sasha recognizes his face from the weekly magazine, *Ogonek*, making clear that the only person who does not know him is her sister (Gasparian 122).

Although Sasha keeps the bouquet, it is only once she is slightly older, and the war begins, that she and Astakhov end up, by chance, in the same shelter during an air raid. Astakhov sees a fellow pilot and Sasha overhears their conversation, during which Astakhov discloses his telephone number. Sasha returns home, calls Astakhov, and they later meet. While the pilot is on leave he and Sasha spend several days together, and after he departs, Sasha discovers that she is pregnant. During the war, Astakhov is reported dead, but Sasha refuses to give up hope that he

will return and she decides to wait for him. When the pilot does come home after serving time as a prisoner of war, his face is severely scarred and he becomes an alcoholic.

Chukhrai's film deals with the way that personalities are connected to admiration in much the same way that that characters in Soviet films admire Stalin, through identification, recognition, and crystallization. Sasha's perception of Astakhov becomes crystallized from the moment she sees him at the New Year's party, associating his face with the images she encounters in the press (Figure 7).



**Figure 7: Screenshot from Grigorii Chukhrai's *Clear Skies* (1961), taken by author; Sasha is enamored by Astakhov**

She is taken by her first impression, by his reputation and appearance. The idea of crystallization can be traced to Stendhal, who wrote about actors in the theatre in his philosophical novel, *On Love*. Stendhal describes the process of crystallization as the main component of love, by arguing that rather than loving a person as that person actually is, one loves a constructed—idealized—version of perfection that obscures the real object of desire from view (33). Marshall's more recent

investigation, which builds on this idea, is also worth exploring in the context of Chukhrai's film, as he discusses the ways that images of popular figures provide an aura for the celebrity "that constructs a form of *admiring identification* . . . to envelop their celebrity sign. From these images the audience can construct the 'perfect hero,' where the star's actions serve as exemplary models for a particular community" (187; emphasis in original). The love that Sasha has for Astakhov is based on her initial impression of him upon his arrival at the party, and this image, in turn, is closely tied to his appearance in the weekly journal—his reputation as a heroic aviator on the state level.

Men who returned home from the war and who had been in POW camps were always under suspicion by the Party. This aspect of Astakhov's background in the film is narrated through the process of losing his Party membership and having it reinstated only after Stalin's death. As Sasha and Astakhov petition to regain his membership during a committee meeting, a statue of Stalin towers over the room, indicating that even as a hero, his time with the enemy is enough to debunk his reputation from the perspective of official domestic culture and to cast him off as a traitor (Figure 8).

What remains consistent in the portrayal of the pilot is the way that Sasha perceives him. Through the turbulence of political and social upheaval, her love for Astakhov remains crystallized. The prism of crystallization that suffuses value to Astakhov is no longer in the hands of the state leader but is controlled through the eyes of Chukhrai's heroine, underscoring the process of the loss of Stalin and the breaking down of the hierarchal structure in the portrayal of the cult of aviation. This process, moreover, is achieved in the private, domesticated space, rather than through public displays of grandeur. Chukhrai uses the model of the hero pilot, visible in Stalinist works, and re-conceptualizes it as a celebrity image through the event of Stalin's death.



**Figure 8: Screenshot from Grigorii Chukhrai's *Clear Skies* (1961), taken by author; Astakhov loses his Party membership**

Sasha sees through Astakhov's wounds, the loss of Party membership, and his depression because her view of him remains fixed in the time she initially met him, in the moment of his celebrity status as a pilot. But the celebrity image of Astakhov is one that came to fruition because it was created by Stalin himself. Rather than demonstrating Stalin's role in the pilot's fame, Chukhrai erases all traces of Astakhov's potential to become a hero under the guidance of Stalin, much less an international figure. The pilot, instead, is a domestic celebrity who undergoes transformation as the result of the death of the leader. His wounds are a sacrifice on behalf of the state, but they are also, in a sense, invisible. For Chukhrai, what matters with regards to the pilot's celebrity image is not his connection to Stalinism, but that he remains a Soviet hero. Put another way, whereas the construction of Chkalov's heroism unfolds for the purposes of the state—and for Stalin—in the public sphere, media attention disappears in Chukhrai's film. Astakhov transforms from being a domestic celebrity pilot to a hero in the new space of identity formation: the home.

The heroine of Shepit'ko's film, Nadezhda (Nadia) Petrukhina (Maiia Bulgakova), who is a former fighter pilot, works as the headmistress of a school. Nadia is a local celebrity in the town

where she lives, but she is beset by the fond memories she has of flying in combat, and of her lover who perished during the war. Whereas Chukhrai's film shifts the idolization of the pilot from the public to the private sphere, Shepit'ko's work casts the cult of the pilot off as a relic of a different era.

Nadia has almost no personal connections, as she is estranged from her adopted adult daughter and treats Pasha (Panteleimon Krymov), the director of the local museum who is in love with her, as an afterthought. Her professional relationships are either severed or distant, as in the case of her nonexistent—or damaged—bonds with the students at her school. She longs, rather, to be at the airfield with younger aviators to whom she can relate and who respect her. Just as her lover was killed in the war, Nadia's pilot profile only exists in the post-war period as the realization of a personality that is already dead.

As Tatiana Mikhailova and Mark Lipovetsky write, with respect to the female pilot's place in Soviet culture,

If the woman who killed professionally survived the war, her existence created an insoluble problem, whose poignancy increased in the atmosphere of Soviet culture's declarative feminism. On the one hand, officially proclaimed gender equality demanded that a female veteran receive the same symbolic rewards as her male compatriots. On the other, such a woman lost her "gender license" and was pushed outside stable gender scenarios—both legitimate (mother, innocent girl) and transgressive (harlot). From this point of view, the film . . . is particularly paradoxical, since it thoroughly problematizes all existing archetypes as well as other gender scenarios of the female veteran's self-realization in the postwar period, specifically during the Thaw (87).

To add to their analysis, I maintain that besides being a film about war veterans and the paradoxical quality of gender relations, the film is about the transition of the cult of aviation to new types of heroes. *Wings* consciously underscores the shift from the cult of pilots to a different kind of Soviet celebrity, functioning as a custodian for Stalin's falcons and ushering in a new generation of fame in Soviet cultural texts.

While sunbathing at the beach towards the beginning of the film, Nadia is shown lying on the sand in her bathing suit. Her face, however, remains invisible, as she covers it to shield the sun. Upon closer inspection, it is clear that her face is protected by a magazine featuring cosmonauts on its cover (Figure 9).



**Figure 9: Screenshot from Larisa Shepit'ko's *Wings* (1966), taken by author; Nadia lies on the beach**

As Mikhailova and Lipovetsky suggest, this scene reveals that the “loaded visual image unmistakably communicates the obliteration of Petrukhina’s embraced identity” (93). This moment, indeed, suggests the collapse of Nadia’s identity and relationships as the result of her former status as an airwoman. It, however, also insists on the “laying to rest” of the cult of the aviator. Nadia lying still on the beach suggests that not only her body, but her mind and her energy are melting away into a different era, as new heroes literally rest on top of her. Nadia’s identification with the hero pilot will be archived, laid to rest, and become a symbol of the past.

Throughout the film, Nadia struggles to overcome difficulties in her personal and professional relationships, and those connections remain unresolved when she visits the local museum where Pasha works. Nadia, during her visit, slowly—and self-aware of this process—becomes part of the museum, as she is even asked to move from perching on one of the exhibits. As Nadia witnesses a group of school children visit the museum’s stations and exhibitions, she recognizes her own photograph, part of a display of fighter pilots from the war period. She overhears children ask the guide questions, and one of them inquires as to whether the women in the photo perished during the war. The guide responds that one of the women died, but that Nadia is a local who lives in town. It is at this moment that Nadia’s status as a pilot becomes the most intriguing component of her character as a Thaw heroine. Her position as an aviator, as part of the “family” of cult heroes, is officially relegated to a museum exhibit. The pilot is a figure with whom Nadia can no longer live with in the present and, at the same time, a persona that has become an artifact of the past.

As Kaganovsky notes in her analysis of *Wings*, “Nadezhda is a Stalinist character displaced from her position of cultural dominance by the changes brought on by the Thaw . . . As a result, she remains . . . an ‘awkward reminder’ of a heroic past that has no consequence in the new, post-heroic present” (491). Nadia is a misfit, and this conception of her is solidified when she approaches Pasha in his office and asks him to marry her. “I am one of your exhibits,” she says.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>As Kaganovsky reminds us, “In the opening credits of *Wings*, we are given Nadezhda’s body in bits and pieces, as a measuring tape is stretched across her shoulders, back, and arms and a male voice reads out the measurements. Indeed, this film is about ‘fit’: though Nadezhda is a ‘standard size 48,’ we understand this as a metaphor for the ways she does and does not fit into

As a pilot whose life, memories, and wishes are part of a different era, devoid of all symbolic and otherwise familial connections, Nadia cannot find her niche. For all of the questions with which the film engages with respect to women veterans during the Thaw, it also signals the redefinition of categories of social groups, and Nadia's "fame" from long ago is no longer relevant in the contemporary cultural environment. As opposed to Chkalov, a celebrity both in the historical sense and as a character in Kalatozov's film, Nadia's existence merely makes overtures to the assumed existence of such heroes and heroines outside the celluloid space.

#### 1.4 CONCLUSION

Writing in *Moskovskaia pravda* in 1961, Kalatozov claimed that,

Иногда меня упрекали за непоследовательность творческих концепций . . . Думаю, что такие упреки неосновательны. В течение всей моей творческой жизни я стремился говорить со зрителем о том, чем живет наша страна. Иногда получалось более удачно, иногда менее. Но мне довелось рассказать о первых победах в небе будущих покорителей космоса и о первых покорителях не космической, а земной целины . . . Ведь каждый художник—это прежде всего гражданин своего отечества и своей эпохи, со всеми ее сложностями и противоречиями.<sup>22</sup>

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the film, into the new Soviet society that wants something else from its women—the acknowledgement and acceptance of sexual difference as structuring principle" ("Ways of Seeing" 493).

<sup>22</sup>"Sometimes I have been criticized for inconsistency in my creative conceptions . . . I think that such criticisms are unfounded. In the course of my artistic life I have tried to talk with the audience about what is most important to us in our country today. Sometimes it turned out more successfully, sometimes less. But I had occasion to represent the first victories in the skies of

Kalatozov's view, as a filmmaker who worked during the transition between the monumentality of Stalinist culture through the search for new kinds of celebrities during the Thaw years, reflects in its own way, a perspective of the celebrity system in the Soviet Union. The director's work, in his view, serves as an example of the types of personalities that exist in a particular society or socio-political system. In the context of the Soviet cult of aviation, at least for the *Chkalov* film, it is clear that Kalatozov recognized the importance of the personalities that represented the Soviet Union, as well as the vulnerability of the system by which those figures were constructed. As Vasili Livanov noted, reflecting on Kalatozov's cinematic oeuvre, "Михаил Константинович хотел бы быть в эпицентре самых значительных мировых приключений."<sup>23</sup>

Kalatozov, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, also understood the significance of the faces of Soviet culture on the global stage. In examining how cinema constructed the cult of aviation, therefore, I maintain that the Soviet cultural-political apparatus imagined its falcons not only in the domestic sphere as the "children" of Stalin, as socialist-realist narratives maintain, but also in the international arena as a way to underscore the achievements and values of the socialist system. Although Kalatozov sought to highlight the pilot through the framework of a biographical narrative, he also understood the constitution of fame, the ways in which celebrities could

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our future conquerors of space and the first conquerors not in space but on virgin lands . . . After all, every artist is before anything else a citizen of his homeland and his epoch with all of its complexities and contradictions" (translation mine).

<sup>23</sup>"Mikhail Konstantinovich wanted to be at the epicenter of the world's most important adventures" (translation mine).

communicate the hierarchical structure of culture, and convey that system within the international community.

In dealing with the legacy of Stalinism, Soviet cinema also had to take into account all facets of the cultural system that accompanied his life and death, meaning that it had to reimagine the cult of aviators and their presence in texts. As the celebrity pilot in cinema gradually became the artifact of Stalinist-era heroism, pilots began to be replaced by new types of personalities, like the cult of cosmonauts, which also included a large component of international interest in the way that the celebrities of space flight were envisioned. Chapter Two, however, moves away from space flight to an exploration of Tat'iana Samoilova, the darling of Soviet melodrama, and her celebrity text.

## 2.0 TAT'IANA SAMOILOVA, TRANSNATIONAL CELEBRITY

Tat'iana Samoilova, the acclaimed star of Kalatozov's, *The Cranes Are Flying* (*Letiat zhuravli*, 1957) died on 4 May 2014 at age 80. When she was buried at Novodevich'e Cemetery—the site of hundreds of gravestones marking Russian and Soviet celebrities from numerous cultural spheres, heads of state, and one of the most trafficked tourist destinations in Moscow—devoted mourners laid dozens of flowers, wreaths, banners, and other objects at her plot. Samoilova played two major roles during the Thaw and early Stagnation in Soviet cinema: Veronika in Kalatozov's film and Anna Karenina in Aleksandr Zarkhi's 1967 adaptation of the novel. Samoilova's celebrity status sharply declined after her roles in these popular films and she remained largely absent from the public sphere until the collapse of the Soviet state when she returned to acting in several small television roles.<sup>24</sup> The framed photo that stands at Samoilova's resting place, however, commemorates her image in the late 1950s as a young actress at the height of Soviet and world fame, imparting the question of how her star text became crystallized and tethered to her character as Veronika.

Samoilova was unquestionably the brightest star of 1950s melodramas in the USSR. When *Cranes* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1958, Samoilova received special recognition for her role as well as multiple proposals to emigrate and work abroad. These offers, which included an invitation from Hollywood, never came to fruition as a result of the cultural

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<sup>24</sup>In 1993, Samoilova was awarded “People's Artist of Russia,” and in 2007 she was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Moscow International Film Festival.

authorities' decision that she would remain in the Soviet Union.<sup>25</sup> That her role as Veronika, to a great extent, granted Samoilova celebrity status on a global scale, and yet also confined her ensuing career within the state's borders, further complicates the ways that one may understand the volatility of celebrity texts. While celebrities like Dem'ianenko were more or less unknown in the West, Samoilova gained recognition all over the world when she appeared as the darling of Cannes and as *Cranes* was released for extensive international distribution in states both in and outside of the Soviet orbit. Whereas the Soviet press crafted Dem'ianenko as the ideal Soviet citizen and a representative of socialist values, a matter that will be addressed in Chapter Three, with respect to Samoilova the media was more interested in her appeal to the world cinema community and, as a result, many print publications used the language of the global to illustrate her as a world star.

Samoilova, in one sense, is emblematic of what scholars in celebrity and media studies refer to as the “failed star.” Often associated with unsuccessful celebrity endorsement campaigns, this concept also describes star figures whose careers “flop” as the result of gossip, scandals, or other highly-publicized events that stonewall their careers. Samoilova, in existing literature on Soviet cinema, is consistently discussed as a success story for her stunning role as Veronika and her status as an ambassador for the Soviet Union in the West. I maintain, however, that her popularity must be understood through the disparity between her persona as it existed on screen

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<sup>25</sup>Samoilova was specifically invited to play the role of Anna Karenina opposite Gerard Philipe (Iaroshevskaiia 84). Supposedly, Soviet authorities responded by saying, “Это наша актриса, и мы сами будем ее снимать.” (“This is our actress and we will shoot her ourselves.”) An adaptation of *Anna Karenina* starring Gerard Philipe was never made.

and in the media and her Hollywood career that never came to fruition. I argue that the way that her celebrity text functioned may be understood through the notion of the transnational, or what I call the “almost transnational,” which crystallized in the moment she appeared at Cannes and the ensuing press coverage of that event. Conversations in the Soviet media concentrated on her appeal to global audiences as well as her bygone invitation to Hollywood. This narrative established a sense of loyalty to socialist culture and the idea that Soviet audiences had their own star, a badge of pride coveted by the wider cinema world but a figure who did not belong to the West. In the international press, Samoilova was portrayed as an ordinary, talented Soviet girl restricted by the confines of the cultural circumstances from which she arose.

This part of the project returns to Stendhal’s notion of crystallization; to clarify the notion of the constructed, or idealized, version of perfection that eclipses the real object of desire, Stendhal reaches to nature to construct his metaphor. Crystallization, he claims, “is the working of the mind, as it draws from all around it new discoveries of the loved object’s perfection” (6). “If a twig is dropped in the Salzburg mines,” he writes, “after two or three months, the bare branch will emerge covered in sparkling crystals. This ‘new’ twig obstructs the ‘real’ twig from view” (6). Stendhal later expands this notion by drawing an analogy to actors in the theatre. “At the theatre, we can see something similar with actors adored by the public; their audiences no longer notice what they possess in the way of real beauty or ugliness . . . people no longer saw the actors’ true features or manners, but rather the beauty that their imaginations had long been used to lending them, in recognition and in memory of all the pleasures they had provided.” He continues to describe the effect of such performances on audiences: “the raptures of an entire audience and the *emotional* effect that these have on a young heart will swiftly obscure it,” meaning the real actor on stage (33; emphasis in original).

In working from the idea that Samoilova's image became crystallized in her appearance at Cannes, I maintain that this portrayal of the actress precipitates existing conjectures around the idea of contemporary transnational stardom and celebrity culture. Drawing on working methodologies of the transnational, I first employ the notion outlined by Russell Meeuf and Raphael Raphael: "the appeal of . . . transnational stars can also be tied to their negotiation of the global and the local, their ability to function as local heroes integrated into local or national cultures and simultaneously as icons of global modernity" (4). As a resource for negotiation of ideologies, stars "function as agents of the global media systems that create them while also acting as sources of pleasure and identification for their audiences" (5). Samoilova was, first and foremost, an actress from the socialist world and through this Soviet "national" role, her image could serve its purpose for the state as an admired Soviet star at home. Samoilova's celebrity life thrived through the mythology of her star text on celluloid and in the press, the part of her celebrity status that was able to transcend not only national boundaries but ideological systems, if not through her somatic presence.

## **2.1 THE ACTRESS IN *CRANES***

Samoilova's family had a prominent reputation in theatre acting. Her father, Evgenii Samoilov, performed in Vsevolod Meierkhol'd's troupe until Meierkhol'd's arrest in 1939. She studied ballet at the Stanislavskii and Nemirovich-Danchenko Musical Theatre School in the late 1940s but eventually chose to pursue acting; she attended the Shchukin Theatre School in the mid-1950s before eventually graduating from the Lunacharskii State Institute for Theatrical Arts after starring

in *Cranes*. Samoilova, in fact, had not yet graduated when Kalatozov approached her about playing the role of Veronika.

It is difficult to overstate the impact of Samoilova's performance or *Cranes* as a film in Thaw cinema culture. As Chapter One emphasized, melodramas, along with comedies, were the primary cinematic genres of the post-Stalinist era and films like *Cranes* focused on the effects of the nuclear family, inherited from the war and from Stalin's symbolic fatherhood. *Cranes*'s plot centered around two protagonists, Boris (Aleksi Batalov) and Veronika (Samoilova), just prior to the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. Much to Veronika's chagrin, Boris immediately volunteers to go to the front, but they have no chance to say goodbye prior to his departure. After some time passes, Boris's cousin, Mark, a draft dodger, rapes Veronika while Boris is dying at the front. Mark and Veronika eventually marry even though she is crippled by guilt and never stops waiting for Boris.<sup>26</sup>

As Prokhorov has written regarding melodrama's role in Soviet cinema,

Even though soviet critics typically denied that soviet directors made melodramas, the genre of family melodrama became especially popular in Russia during World War II. Its popularity may be explained by the predominantly female film audience and the shifts in iconography of soviet culture after the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War, which specifically redefined the war and family tropes. Before the Nazi invasion of Russia, the primary instantiation of both the war and the family tropes was the Russian Civil War—the epic war of the “big family's” origins. World War II became the second major

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<sup>26</sup>Irina Shilova writes that Samoilova herself understood the character of Veronika as “a pure person whom it was wrong to hurt or offend ... who was deprived of all her innocence by one catastrophe after another ... who died a little bit every day of the war. Notwithstanding her betrayal, she became a kind of icon for young women who identified with her” (qtd. Woll, *Cranes* 75)

instantiation of the war trope in soviet culture. For contemporaries, this war became the personal drama of separation, of extreme violence and emotions, and, most important, the moral polarization of characters, objects, and events into “us” and “the enemies.” (“Soviet Family Melodrama” 209)

While Samoilova’s character was the narrative center of *Cranes*, cinema of the period also focused on the returning soldier hero, youth, and often the relationship between them in order to rebuild the nuclear family in the home. Veronika—and Samoilova, therefore—already stood out in this way from the types of films that were under production in the recent post-war years and in the immediate period following Stalin’s death.

Samoilova’s performance as Veronika is often contextualized within these parameters, and she is also praised for her perceived effortless appearance and talent not traditionally associated with Hollywood stardom.<sup>27</sup> While much attention on Samoilova’s role in *Cranes* focused on her charisma, Veronika as a character both built on and departed from notions of the female heroine in Soviet cinema.<sup>28</sup> As Josephine Woll argues,

Veronika hardly resembles traditional Soviet female paradigms. She does not embody civic virtues, like the canonized Zoia Kosmodemianskaia, a high-school girl martyred by the Nazis. She is not the beacon of fidelity enshrined by Konstantin Simonov in his poem “Wait for Me” [*Zhdi menia*], an “elegiac if inelegant love poem, that millions recited as if it were a prayer; that women repeated as tears streamed down their faces; that men adopted as their own expression of the mystical power of a woman’s love.” She is not simple,

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<sup>27</sup>“Samoilova—with her unusual beauty, the ‘lightness and grace of her full figure’, the apparent spontaneity of her acting (‘she seemed to *be*, not to act’)—made of Veronika a woman quite distinct and individual, the thematic and stylistic center of the movie . . . In the opinion of Maia Turovskaia, Samoilova herself, with her canted eyes, her gravity, the ‘childlike simplicity’ of her face—rather than unhappy, stubbornly loyal Veronika—became the embodiment of Russian young womanhood for the entire world” (Woll, *Cranes* 39-40).

<sup>28</sup>See Prokhorov, “Soviet Family Melodrama,” 225.

loving, and modest like the post-office girl Mashenka, from Iulii Raizman's 1942 eponymous film. (*Real Images* 74-5)

The attention she received at Cannes, moreover, created a conversation around Samoilova as the major actress and celebrity in Soviet filmmaking, akin to only the brightest stars in the West. "If Rita Hayward and Marilyn Monroe create exceptional types on screen, images of femininity inaccessible to ordinary women, Samoilova plays Veronika as the opposite, a girl similar to millions of girls, though one poetically exaggerated" (Woll, *Cranes* 77). Samoilova was consistently discussed as the embodiment of the Soviet woman and the new Thaw-era individual.<sup>29</sup>

As Woll illustrates,

*Cranes* was not *sui generis*; it had cinematic and thematic antecedents, some dating back to the 1920s, others of more recent, "thaw" vintage. It united major thematic trends discernible in slightly earlier Soviet films, including the validation of private emotion over public commitment, the emphasis on "ordinary" people, and the choice of the Second World War as a source of hero-images. Stylistically, it exploited the human diversity newly available to film-makers, and the potential expressiveness of a subjective camera. It was not the first film to privilege image over dialogue, nor the first to omit explicit authorial point-of view, both characteristics of a number of films that preceded *Cranes*, though no other film combined them in quite the same way. (Woll, *Cranes* 10)

The film's and Samoilova's success was also reflective of a high-point in Soviet cinema culture at home and in film cultures around the world. *Cranes* was screened on nearly every continent and even triumphed in box office sales outside the Soviet Union. As Fedor Razzakov claims,

Это был звездный час всего советского кинематографа и лично Самойловой. Например, во Франции в 1958 году этот фильм попал в лидеры проката . . . Кроме этого в том же году он был отмечен призами на фестивалях в Локарно, Ванкувере и Мехико. Западные журналисты тут же окрестили исполнительницу главной

женской роли в этом фильме «Советской Мэрилин Монро и Брижит Бардо» (65-66).<sup>30</sup>

Samoilova herself was very aware of the scale on which she was recognized and celebrated; she was well attuned to the differences in stardom and celebrity culture between the Soviet Union and the West. In a 1959 article the Soviet press reported on an interview that Samoilova gave a French journalist a year earlier at Cannes:

В Советском Союзе вы пользуетесь таким же успехом, как в Канне? –спросила у молодой актрисы французская журналистка.

В Советском Союзе нет культа звезд, просто ответила Татьяна Самойлова, –у нас говорят о роли, о ее психологическом раскрытии, но не о самой актрисе. Это действительно так. И все же мы не скрываем, что есть киноактеры и актрисы, которых мы любим за их талант, за их творческую индивидуальность. Одна из таких актрис--Татьяна Самойлова. Это все же не значит, что талант одаренной актрисы расцвел сам по себе, что на его развитие не было затрачено много кропотливого труда.<sup>31</sup> (Golos Rigi)

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<sup>30</sup>“It was the high point of all of Soviet cinema and for Samoilova personally. For example, this film was the box office leader in France in 1958 . . . on top of that it was awarded prizes at festivals in Locarno, Vancouver, and Mexico. Western journalists immediately labeled the main female role in the film “the Soviet Marilyn Monroe and Brigitte Bardot” (translation mine).

<sup>31</sup>“In the Soviet Union, are you as popular as you are at Cannes?, a French journalist asked the actress.

In the Soviet Union we don’t have a cult of the star, Tat’iana Samoilova answered simply. We talk about roles and about psychological developments, but not about the actress herself. It’s actually like this. And yet we do not try to hide that there are film actors and actresses whom we love for their talent, for their creative individuality. One of these actresses is Tat’iana Samoilova. It does not at all mean that the talent of the gifted actress bloomed on its own or developed without a lot of hard work” (translation mine).

Samoilova's reference to the lack of conversation about film stars in the USSR reflects the relationship between the celebrity and the free market, and the resistance to discussing Soviet stars as celebrity figures as a result of their association with capitalist culture. This hesitation is corroborated by more contemporary studies of film stars in the People's Republic of China under Mao. As Xiaoning Lu writes of stardom in the Chinese context, there is an "uneasiness toward detaching the star from an analytical framework of commercial culture" (97). Lu maintains, moreover, that the word "star" in Mao's China was hardly present in everyday speech. "'Star' carried a spectrum of negative connotations: corrupted lifestyles, loftiness, individualism and liberalism, all of which originate from the same source, capitalism. Specific to cinema, 'star' immediately evoked images of glamorous and fashionable movie stars in Hollywood as well as in cosmopolitan Shanghai, which are the most sensual symbols of commercial culture" (98).

While the word "celebrity" did not appear in Soviet discourse, as a result of the high volume of Samoilova's publicity the language of Western stardom was used as a way to illustrate that she was, in some ways, constructed as a celebrity for Western audiences. In the late 1950s PRC, for example, *Cranes* was received negatively and, as a result, Soviet officials criticized the publicity materials circulating around Samoilova's star image in China. Because the PRC was at a different stage of its own socialist system, Samoilova's persona was intended, Soviet officials argued, to be distributed in capitalist countries, not to Chinese mass audiences. As Tina Mai Chen writes,

Soviet films criticized or rejected by the Chinese follow a similar pattern and point to the desire to remove particular expressions of female sexuality from nationalist and

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internationalist socialist imaginaries. In 1960 the Chinese declined to import *Cranes are Flying* and *Ballad of a Soldier*. As Thaw-era films, they participated in the redefinition of war heroism and introduction of personal emotions. In *Cranes are Flying* the protagonist Veronika sees her lover Boris go to war and while she waits for him with intensity and devotion, she also marries his cousin. The film's focus on love and betrayal, and the way in which some scenes state the party line only to challenge it with humour and human warmth, diverged from the Chinese socialist vision of the late 1950s. Class struggle, from the perspective of late 1950s and early 1960s Maoism, was no laughing matter and the lines of struggle and contradiction were to be sharpened, not blurred. (73)

Such resistance to Veronika, the character who departed from the trope of the faithful heroine of Stalinist cinema, was ironically underscored by Khrushchev himself, who referred to her as “a prostitute running through the streets” (Shitikova). Film officials outside the socialist context, however, were not fixated on her character's narrative transgressions but the possibility of Samoilova transcending the Soviet film system and acting in their own institutions.

## 2.2 THE NOTION OF TRANSNATIONAL CELEBRITY

With respect to cinema, the term “transnational” is predominantly employed to describe film production and the movement of film companies and studios across national boundaries. I explore several notions of the meaning of “transnational” in order to craft a space for the use of the term in celebrity studies, which more frequently prefers “global” or “international.” As a result of the fact that a space for Soviet celebrity culture does not exist in the current discourse on stardom in media studies, the term “transnational” offers a way to talk about bringing “into question the fixity of national cultural discourses” which, in turn, highlights the essence of Samoilova's celebrity text (Higbee and Lim 11). Randall Halle writes that,

If we distinguish the material economic processes discussed so far as belonging to the dynamic of *globalization*, in *transnationalism* we find a term to designate the sociopolitical

ideational processes, or to put it more simply, the dynamic of culture. While the world has always been in contact through trade routes and human migration, the era in which the nation-state became a fetter on capital starts after World War II. The dynamic of globalization accelerates dramatically after 1989, the collapse of the socialist block, and the rapid expansion of free-market capitalism. Transnationalism, as distinctive from internationalism or cosmopolitanism, develops as a political and cultural organizing principle during the same era. Now, clearly the relationship of globalization and transnationalism is not a direct one; transnationalism can actually offer a counter to the global free market, giving states the ability to organize themselves into limited regional trading blocks. Nevertheless, we should underscore that transnationalism as a productive form of cultural-political organization and identification has first emerged as a significant force along with globalization. (5; emphasis in original)

While the use of “transnational” to describe celebrities and stars presents the quandary of inadvertently binding the celebrity figure to one socio-political or economic system, I draw on Samoilova as transnational in order to underscore her experience at Cannes—the face of a moment in which the film festival as an event, and Samoilova as its star, could exist across states, ideologies, spaces, and political discourse.

Meeuf and Rafael, moreover, continue their definition of transnational in the following way:

In contradistinction to “global,” a concept bound up with the philosophical category of totality, and in contrast to “international,” predicated on political systems in a latent relationship of parity, as signaled by the prefix “inter-,” the intermediate and open term “transnational” acknowledges the persistent agency of the state, in a varying but fundamentally legitimizing relationship to the scale of “the nation.” At the same time, the prefix “trans-” implies relations of unevenness and mobility. It is this relative openness to modalities of geopolitical forms, social relations, and especially to the variant *scale* on

which relations in film history have occurred that gives this key term its dynamic force, and utility as a frame for hypotheses about emergent forms.<sup>32</sup> (3)

The notion that “transnational” allows space for the agency of the state in the construction and maintenance of the celebrity figure, as well as the acknowledgement that “transnational” permits space for unevenness, creates an opportunity to think about Samoilova as a transnational star.

Referring to Mary Louise Pratt’s work, Kathleen Newman looks at transnational cinema as a “contact zone,” which references the aptness of cinema and other media formats to make connections, even if they are only momentary or temporary, between peoples and places that transcend, while also reflecting, global inequalities (9).<sup>33</sup> Given the broader circumstances of

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<sup>32</sup>“At stake in this definition of ‘transnational’ is the ability of media, such as cinema, to produce cultural meaning in relation to (but not dictated by) the existing power structures of nations and states, to remain mobile, flexible, and open to multiple avenues of meaning and pleasure in different contexts of politics, social relations, and cultural assumptions” (Meeuf and Rafael 3).

<sup>33</sup>“The powerful images and narratives surrounding media celebrities are a key example of such contact zones; the zones act as sites of transnational media circulation in which the constructs of nation or the inequalities of global capitalism, even when glaringly present, can be obscured or put aside in favor of the seemingly intimate and personal connections created by consuming transnational stars . . . From a more cynical perspective, the pleasures of consuming transnational stars might simply be an ideological distraction, a means through which international politics and power relations can escape critical or resistant questioning. But in the true spirit of the contact zone, we must also consider these connections as important moments of cross-cultural communication, open and flexible connections facilitated by transnational media that can reveal

Thaw-era artistic and political culture, however, Samoilova's appearance at Cannes and her ability to function as a transnational celebrity must be silhouetted within the larger context of Soviet efforts towards internationalism and cosmopolitanism in the 1950s. In his 1956 speech at the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev denounced Stalin's cult of personality, an impetus for the way in which cultural politics became defined by a series of contradictions over the following decade. The period of the Thaw and early Stagnation in the Soviet arts consisted of a series of mini "thaws" and "freezes" that characterized the changing levels of state restriction on production and distribution in the arts. Tighter ideological restrictions followed into the years of Stagnation, and the era of "taboo topics" in the arts did not appear again until the years of Perestroika.<sup>34</sup>

The tightening and loosening of restrictions in the artistic environment, moreover, reflected the atmosphere on the political spectrum and the Soviet Union's participation in international affairs in the Cold War global community. The release of *Cranes* and Samoilova's appearance at

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a great deal about the foundations of individuality within a changing global modernity"

(Newman 3-4).

<sup>34</sup>In literature, for example, "Khrushchev spelled out the new rules when he met with writers and artists in March and again in May 1957. Ominously, he compared the Soviet literary 'opposition' with the Petofi circle, those Hungarian writers who had played a major role in the events leading up to the uprising. The warning was patent. All major arts publications reprinted the relevant comments. Editors everywhere recapitulated Khrushchev's main points: artistic obedience to the Party line, conformity to socialist realist patterns, ideological orthodoxy" (Woll, *Cranes* 9).

Cannes occurred at an important moment in Khrushchev's tenure as Soviet Premier. If the arts may be conceptualized through the framework of mini "thaws" and "freezes", then the political environment, both "at home" in the Soviet Union and in the USSR's relationship with the international community can be conceived as a series of seesaw moments of ironclad conservatism and détente.

In the years just before *Cranes*, the relationship between the USSR and the West began to shift and Soviet officials advocated diplomatic changes in the state's relationships with Western countries. As Eleonory Gilburd explains,

The year 1955-6 was of far-reaching change in Soviet-Western cultural relations. After the Soviet delegation returned home with renewed confidence from the Geneva Summit in the summer of 1955, the Central Committee passed a series of nearly identical resolutions on the "expansion of cultural ties" with various countries. Earlier, only cultural relations with the socialist bloc had been subject to planning; now the practice was extended to capitalist countries—with important implications. The new policy erased the formal distinction between approaches to socialist and capitalist cultures. Cultural exchanges in the socialist world were based on bilateral agreements, and mixed commissions oversaw the fulfilment of these treaties. Soviet propaganda claimed for this system a unique conceptual foundation: here was a novel type of foreign relations based on "socialist internationalism," juridical parity, and respect for all cultures. This model, its structure and rationale, was now transferred to relations with capitalist countries. Placing exchange with the West on the books assured regularity: however carefully measured and censored, Western culture would be an accepted and recurrent presence in Soviet theatres, libraries, and museums. Diplomatic conferences and summits not only produced official communiqués, they were also surrounded by first-time-ever cultural events—foreign exhibitions, film festivals, tourist delegations, radio concerts. (364)

Moscow, moreover, hosted the International Youth Festival in 1957, one of the most important successes in Khrushchev's efforts towards cosmopolitanism, internationalism, and cultural universalism.<sup>35</sup> "A signature event, a landmark moment in the mythology of the Thaw,

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<sup>35</sup>"In the mid-1950s, the initiatives for citizen diplomacy and cultural exchange created a breach in the information hierarchy. During the 1957 Moscow International Youth Festival, the breach was filled with the names of iconic performers, sounds of music and foreign speech, token

and a watershed in numerous biographies, the festival was unparalleled in scale, scope, investment, excitement, and impact on the subsequent lives of participants” (Gilburd 375).

1955 saw Khrushchev’s trip to Great Britain and the arrival of many French tourists in the Soviet Union, a French film festival, and talks of cultural exchanges with the French in 1957. This model became a paradigm for Soviet-US negotiations in 1957, as well.<sup>36</sup> After the release of *Cranes* and the appearance of Samoilova at Cannes, moreover, the United States hosted Khrushchev on his tour of the US. This was the first time that a Soviet Premier had even

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objects, and charming images. As emblems of the 1950s, as memorabilia, and as the context for the habituation of Western imports to come, these names objects, sounds, and images would prove formative for late Soviet culture . . . Short-lived propagandistic projects brought the Soviet Union into the global circulation of sounds, images, and goods; and diplomatic contingencies brought a permanent presence of Western culture that would define Soviet life for the next thirty years” (Gilburd 363-4).

<sup>36</sup>“That year France was celebrated in the Soviet Union unequivocally and passionately. In late summer 1955, hundreds of French tourists disembarked at the Leningrad port as crowds flocked to the Neva embankment, waving and chanting greetings . . . the first French film festival sparked the Soviet love affair with Gerard Philipe; and the first USSR-France football match drew 80,000 thrilled fans and ended diplomatically, in a draw . . . Already in the summer of 1957, the French were willing to discuss cultural exchange, and by the fall, the diplomats were back at the negotiating table. Still, these meetings were not easy. The French refused to sign the Cultural Convention drawn up in Moscow, making any such agreement conditional on the lifting of Soviet travel restrictions and the distribution of foreign publications” (Gilburd 366-7).

considered visiting the States; Khrushchev's visit, as its own isolated cultural event, was marked by the same pattern of "thaws" and "freezes" in his interactions with US officials and citizens during his visits to major US cities. His arrival at Andrews Airforce Base in Washington, D.C. saw hundreds of people line the streets to catch a glimpse of the Soviet Premier, but given the Cold War political climate Americans did not know how to react. Instead of cheering, applauding, or smiling, most US citizens who came to see Khrushchev lined the sidewalks with stoic expressions. In New York City, the leader was greeted with provocative anti-Soviet propaganda. These initiatives continued throughout the duration of his tour, prompting Khrushchev to take an initiative to mingle more with the average US citizen. When he visited a farm in Iowa, for instance, he was even photographed patting the beer gut of one particularly robust Iowan (Stone and Toidze).

Given the relative success of Khrushchev's US tour, arrangements were made for a reciprocal visit from President Eisenhower to the Soviet Union. Khrushchev ordered the construction of a golf course and the near total revamping of Moscow and Leningrad's streets and building edifices among other remodeling projects.<sup>37</sup> As William Taubman notes, the potential for changing relations between the USSR and the West, particularly with the United States, seemed promising.

For decades Muscovites hadn't dared telephone Americans for fear their lines were tapped. Now Americans suddenly got calls from Soviet friends proposing that they get together. Moreover all this genuine enthusiasm could only be expected to swell into a tremendous

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<sup>37</sup>“Although not all preparations for the Eisenhower visit were made public, the Soviet people got the message. Whole neighborhoods in Moscow and Leningrad got face-lifts (streets repaved, facades repainted, etc.). So did a small village in the hinterland through which an American diplomat happened to travel. The village wasn't anywhere near the presidential itinerary, but it was spruced up anyway just in case the president decided to drop in” (Taubman 441).

pro-American crescendo once Eisenhower arrived. Soviet ideological watchdogs were alarmed. The image of the United States as the “class enemy,” carefully cultivated for forty years, was proving hollow. A massive, spontaneous, public ideological defection was in effect taking place. Khrushchev was worried, too . . . Since he was laying the foundation for a new era, “it was particularly important not to stumble at the start of the process when everyone’s nerves were on edge.” (441)

Negotiations for Eisenhower’s visit were terminated, however, after the U-2 spy plane incident. Whether or not Khrushchev “seized on the May 1 U-2 flight to scuttle a summit that wouldn’t live up to its advance billing” or not, the general atmosphere between the US and the Soviet Union once again deteriorated (Taubman 455). Notions of cultural universalism and renewed cultural ties that defined the late 1950s once again shifted.

### **2.3 SAMOILOVA AS TRANSNATIONAL CELEBRITY**

It is within this dynamic cultural and political era that thousands of viewers in countries all over the world saw Samoilova in *Cranes*. The press coverage she received underscored the role that the festival played in launching her from a Soviet actress to a transnational celebrity. The narratives from the competing presses highlighted that, from the Soviet perspective, Samoilova was an international sensation rather than a celebrity that was primarily meant to represent the face of socialism. In the Western press, she was a simple talented Soviet girl who, if lucky, would be able to come to the West to pursue her career. Discussions of Samoilova at Cannes lived on in the press well beyond 1958 and, in fact, appeared every time the actress debuted in a new role.

In the following two examples of retrospective coverage of Samoilova’s career in the Soviet media, press coverage alludes to the fact that she became world-famous, an immediate sensation after her appearance at the festival.

Это был настоящий триумф . . . В эту минуту стало ясно—советский фильм одержал огромную победу, и вчера никому не известная воспитанница Театрального училища имени Щукина стала мировой ‘кино-звездой’ высшего класса. Так кончилась спокойная жизнь Тани Самойловой. И за полтора часа, что длился этот сеанс, она как бы пробежала все ступени той лестницы славы.<sup>38</sup> (Saenko)

Мир еще ничего не знал об одном из своих будущих кумиров. Помню, как раз тогда к ней пришел корреспондент, чтобы сделать фото для ее первой поездки в Италию. Через полгода в Канне Самойлову увенчают лаврами лучшей актрисы мира.<sup>39</sup> (Ivanova)

In these articles, the focus on Samoilova’s career is not the roles that she played but the notion that her visit to France was the pinnacle of her career. These clips, moreover, emphasize the language of world-fame, reinforcing the idea that Samoilova’s star text became crystallized, setting the stage for her transnational persona. Samoilova, as the press emphasizes, will continue to be remembered for her recognition in the West even more than her performance in Soviet cinema.

In 1964, more than half a decade after Samoilova’s visit to France, a periodical in Tajikistan noted the French media’s approach to Samoilova as an actress.

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<sup>38</sup>“It was a real triumph. At that moment it became clear—the Soviet film had won a great victory, as yesterday an unknown student of the Shchukin Drama School became a world ‘movie star’ of the highest level. And so ended the quiet life of Tania Samoilova. And after an hour and a half of the screening it was as if she climbed all the steps on the ladder of fame” (translation mine).

<sup>39</sup>“The world did not know a single thing about its future idol. I remember when the reporter arrived to take a photo for her first trip to Italy. Half a year later at Cannes Samoilova was laurelled as the best actress in the world” (translation mine).

А французская газета 'Пари Суар', привыкшая рекламировать, «звезд», авторитетно заявила: «У русских появилась первая кинозвезда—Татьяна, входящая в мировую плеяду 'кинозвезд.'<sup>40</sup> (Komsomolets Tadjikistana)

This mention of Samoilova is particularly interesting, as it appears during the year of the release of Giuseppe De Santis and Dmitrii Vasil'ev's Soviet-Italian war drama, *Attack and Retreat* (*Oni shli na vostok*, 1964). Samoilova played the role of Sonia in this film; yet, the article underscores her appearance at Cannes and her status as a global star, a figure not heralded for her talent in cinema but an actress coveted by the Western media. This further highlights that her popularity was crafted as a way to emphasize the desire that Western cinema figures had to develop the actress's career.

Much attention has also been focused on the physical image that Samoilova as Veronika projected to the global cinema-going community. In an article from 1971, nearly fifteen years after *Cranes* and four years after her role in Zarkhi's film, an article touched on the popularity of the "Samoilova look" immediately after the release of Kalatozov's film.

Облик Татьяны Самойловой, ее образ приобрел значение мирового эталона. И если вы помните, как после фильма 'Колдунья' молниеносно изменились женские прически, так после ленты 'Летят журавли' миллионы девушек захотели походить на Таню Самойлову. У актрисы появились подражательницы и на экране, и в жизни.<sup>41</sup> (Vladimirov)

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<sup>40</sup>“The French paper, *Pari Soir* accustomed to advertising 'stars,' authoritatively stated, 'The Russians got their first movie star—Tat'iana, who is part of the global constellation of movie stars'” (translation mine).

<sup>41</sup>“The face of Tat'iana Samoilova, her image has acquired world-wide value. And if you remember how after the film, *The Blonde Witch*, women's hairstyles changed at the speed of light, then after the film *The Cranes are Flying* millions of girls wanted to look like Tania Samoilova. The actress was followed by imitators, on screen and in real life.”

In this example, there is an attempt by the Soviet press to liken Samoilova's popularity to that of other global stars. *The Blonde Witch* is a 1956 production directed by Andre Michel in which the protagonists' relationship is kindled across European national borders. The comparison in this text, between the star of *The Blonde Witch* and Samoilova suggests not only the clichéd relationship between fans and star in which fans strive to become like the star figure, but it suggests that Samoilova's celebrity text is of global—or transnational—value. Samoilova's image is associated not only with the screen star, but with the celebrity who holds appeal for the entire world, the shining star of Soviet cinema, fashion, and culture.

An English language paper took a different approach to the appearance of Samoilova:

During the XI International Film Festival in Cannes, among the numerous screen artists, many of them world-famous, a young girl, surprisingly unlike a fashionable film star, attracted the attention of press and public. Quiet and unhurried in her movements, smiling rarely and taking everything in with a melancholy, slightly absent-minded gaze, she was remarkably modest and unaffected, though at the same time she conveyed the impression of extraordinary inner power, dignity and a capacity for deeply feeling the experiences of life and art. This was the young Soviet actress Tatiana Samoilova, and the present festival being the first she had ever participated in she was still completely unknown. But the very next day after *The Cranes Are Flying* was first shown her name became known literally to the whole world.

The same article that discussed the originality and unsuspecting nature of Samoilova, that characterized her as a “simple Soviet girl,” also distinguished her as an instrument of the Soviet film industry, unable to predict when she would obtain the permission or ability to reach her full potential:

Tatiana Samoilova bade France farewell, carrying away to her country the Grand Prize of the festival. New roles and new triumphs await her. She sends greetings to all her friends, especially to the young and talented but still unknown actors and actresses who will some day, like herself . . . be on the world screen. (Anon., Samoilova folder)

This description of the actress conveys a sense of sadness surrounding the end of her visit to France and, more importantly, the awareness that her return to the Soviet Union would bear an unpredictable future in terms of her career on screen.

The media attention from the Western and international press, coupled with the decision that she would remain in the USSR is emphasized in her celebrity text as it was portrayed in the Soviet press. The idea that Western and other global cinema industries were eager to cast Samoilova and to sponsor her career served as consistent subject matter for the Soviet press to emphasize the star's loyalty to Soviet life, cinema, and culture.

## 2.4 CONCLUSION

Recalling her time in France, Samoilova discussed the offers she received to move to the US and the adjudication to remain in the Soviet Union with a sense of melancholy.

в Париже, мне предложили сделать *Анну Каренину* в Голливуде, вместе с Жераром Филиппом . . . Я сказала: “С удовольствием.” Тут же наш глава делегации Радчук меня оборвал. “Ты, -- говорит, -- с удовольствием, а нам актрису одну нельзя отпускать, да так надолго. Нужно посылать с тобой много народа, а нам это невыгодно.” Так Голливуд и замяли. Урусевский мне тогда говорил: “Таня, ради бога, если хочешь, оставайся здесь.” А представители посольства набросились на мои чемоданы и прямо при мне стали их разрывать, перебирать туалеты -- проверяли, не собралась ли я насовсем. Нам разрешили общаться только с коммунистами, ходить в кварталы компартии, запрещали смотреть Францию как таковую . . .<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>“In Paris, I was offered to play *Anna Karenina* in Hollywood, together with Gerard Filipp . . . I said: ‘I would love to.’ At this point the head of our delegation, Radchuk, interrupted me. ‘You would love to,’ he said, ‘but we can’t let an actress go by herself, and for so long, too. It is necessary to send with you a lot of people but to us it is unprofitable.’ With that Hollywood was

Although Samoilova's career never expanded outside Soviet borders, the moment of her visit to France and her appearance at Cannes crystallized her star text: an actress who belonged to Soviet cinema culture but who would be portrayed as an international sensation for the global community during a cultural moment—and thereafter, whenever Soviet cinema had a spirited presence on the world stage. Media coverage of the actress in France precipitated the notion that Samoilova was, on the one hand, a Soviet actress constricted by the cultural conditions under which she arose and, on the other hand, a star who was highly desired and coveted in the international film community.

During the final years of her life, Samoilova suffered from severe clinical depression.

Citing the tragic nature of old movie stars, Sol Shul'man writes that,

Было ли в истории мирового кинематографа что-либо похожее на жизнь и судьбу Татьяны Евгеньевны Самойловой? Можно ли представить себе кого-либо из всемирных знаменитостей в таком жалком и унижительном положении? Можно ли в здравом уме предположить, что звезду мирового масштаба легко сумеет довести до растерянности и слез какой-то тупой охранник Дома кино, не признавший в этой бедно одетой женщине актрису, которой восхищается весь мир.<sup>43</sup>

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erased. Urusevskii said to me at the time: 'Tania, for God's sake if you want, stay here.' But the embassy representatives pounced upon my bags and started rummaging through my clothes—they were trying to make sure that I wasn't planning on staying for good. We were allowed to communicate only with communists, to walk to the neighborhoods of the communist party, forbidden to look at France as it was . . ." (translation mine).

<sup>43</sup>"In the history of cinema has there been anything akin to the life and fate of Tat'iana Samoilova? Can you imagine any famous celebrities in the world in such a miserable and humiliating position? Who in their right mind would think that a dimwitted guard at Dom Kino would be able to bring a world star to tears just because she was poorly dressed and he didn't recognize her as the actress admired by the entire world" (translation mine)?

Despite the hardships that Samoilova faced in the latter half of her life and career, her celebrity life thrived in the press as a transnational figure who could exist across national and state boundaries, as well as different ideological systems. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, Aleksandr Dem'ianenko, in contradistinction, provided a model of celebrity aimed specifically at domestic audiences.

### 3.0 ALEKSANDR DEM'IANENKO: "SHURIK" AS SOCIALIST STAR

As Chapter Two illustrated, the international press became captivated by the idea of a Soviet film star after Samoiloova's special recognition at Cannes for her work as Veronika in *Cranes*. According to Samoiloova herself, Pablo Picasso reacted to her performance with confidence of her imminent career as a celebrity in Hollywood: "Пабло Пикассо тогда, в самую первую нашу встречу, мне сказал: 'Вот сейчас мы с тобой идем, и ты—обыкновенная девочка из Москвы. Но очень скоро ты станешь звездой экрана, и подойти к тебе будет уже невозможно'" (qtd. Razzakov, *Bogini* 65-6).<sup>44</sup> In his appreciation for Samoiloova Picasso touched on the issue central to traditional studies of film stardom: the allure between the star's status as ordinary and extraordinary, the notion that stars are simultaneously familiar and inaccessible. From the point of view of Western and other international media, Samoiloova was the first great Soviet film actress, but as Chapter Two noted, the possibility of her working in the US cinema industry was foiled by the cultural authorities' adjudication that she would remain in the USSR.

Despite the fact that she was the brightest star of Thaw cinema, cultural officials did not nurture Samoiloova for the promotion of socialist initiatives to the degree that they utilized the images of other popular film figures. Comedy actors were better suited for these purposes, in part because of their more indirect role in expressing issues that saturated Thaw-era films—like the

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<sup>44</sup>"During our very first meeting then, Pablo Picasso said to me: "Now you and I are walking together—and you are just an ordinary girl from Moscow. But very soon you will become a film star and to reach you will be impossible'" (translation mine).

place of the individual within the collective—and also because of their importance to the health of the Soviet cinema industry. They captured the spirit of the Thaw in that their celebrity personas mirrored larger narratives at stake in cultural politics and modeled new values that were present on cinema screens. Krista Van Fleit Hang, who writes about socialist film stars and celebrities in the People’s Republic of China under Mao, notes that “Film star images are often comments on the ideas of the society in which the film stars function. In the communist system, the close connections between the cultural establishment’s promotion and publicity of an actor ensured a tightly packaged image” (110). During the Thaw years in Soviet cinema, the actor’s role in the public sphere was often corroborated by the language of Soviet mass media, which ensured that the star’s image was aligned with the socialist vision.

Aleksandr Dem'ianenko provides an apposite point of entry for considering the relationship of the cultural apparatus to stars who were the faces of Soviet cinema specifically for Soviet citizens. The distinction between an international film star of melodrama, like Samoilova, and a Soviet domestic idol of comedy, like Dem'ianenko, encourages an examination of how celebrification of the film star materialized during the Thaw and the way that this process crafted the actor as a socialist celebrity. Whereas the real-life Chkalov gave rise to the celebrity character in Kalatozov’s film, *Shurik*, in a sense, sired Dem'ianenko’s celebrity personality; the blending of Dem'ianenko with his celluloid persona, in fact, proved fruitful in promoting him as a role model of socialist society. Rather than conceiving of stars and celebrities through the dichotomy of the public and the private originally proposed by Dyer, I argue that Soviet media envisioned Dem'ianenko through the framework of the individual and his relationship to the collective. Within this model, his celebrity image emerged as the embodiment of the ideal socialist citizen and created a paradigm for domestic celebrities in the Soviet Union during a cultural moment when Soviet

cinema had a spirited presence on the world stage, largely as the result of the attention paid to Samoilova as a Soviet actress. As this chapter demonstrates, Soviet newspapers promoted Dem'ianenko's image in their publicity campaigns for comedy films, underscoring that his character, "Shurik," demonstrated Thaw-era values and the ability to re-educate unruly constituents of the community.

As part of an ideologically controlled press, print news in the Soviet Union served a central role in everyday life for both cultural authorities and readers.<sup>45</sup> The most crucial function of the Soviet press, as Ellen Propper Mickiewicz notes, was "the socialization or education of its citizens." It did not aim, as she writes, to "bring out base impulses or to cater to corrupting weaknesses . . . but rather to point out roles and models for imitation or avoidance" (53). Towards the end of the Thaw era in 1968, 8,754 newspapers were published and in circulation across the state, including papers in lesser-published presses (Hopkins 192-3). Not only were newspapers deliberately circulated for specific social purposes, but newspaper reading represented one of the most popular leisure activities. Print news, as Mark Hopkins writes, "had a much more complex and socially critical function: to organize and mobilize the population for defined tasks" (51).

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<sup>45</sup>Consider Dyer's writing on stars and the importance of the US media industry (free press) in *Heavenly Bodies*: "Images have to be made. Stars are produced by the media industries, film stars by Hollywood (or its equivalent in other countries) in the first instance, but then also by other agencies with which Hollywood is connected in varying ways and with varying degrees of influence. Hollywood controlled not only the stars' films but their promotion, the pin-ups and glamour portraits, press releases and to a large extent the fan clubs" (5).

Khrushchev, moreover, underscored the pivotal position of journalists in Soviet society during a speech in 1959: “You are not only the true aides of the [Communist] party, but literally the apprentices of the party, the active fighters for its great cause” (qtd. Hopkins 150).

Soviet mass media was structured vertically at every level, for every type of media platform, and consisted of the Central Committee followed by its agency, the Department of Propaganda. The agency was divided into branches and included magazines, newspapers, radio and television, printing plants and facilities, and publishing and distribution. Below the state level this structure existed at the echelons of the republics, *oblasts*, *raions*, and cities. Although recommendations and orders from the Central Committee applied to the entirety of Soviet mass media, the newspaper “industry” was divided into six component parts: the national (state) level, and lower levels that coincided with areas of political administration—republics, *oblasts*, *raions*, cities, and kolkhoz or factory papers (Hopkins 190). Although each republic had national language newspapers with varying breadths of distribution, Russian was the primary language of the press, and circulation of newspapers depended on the prestige or classification of the paper as well as how often it was published.<sup>46</sup>

Although difficult to know precisely how many readers any particular paper reached, it is clear that publicity about film stars and celebrities appeared in a variety of newspaper publications all over the Soviet Union. The materials that featured Dem'ianenko span vertically along the administrative hierarchy of newspapers, as well as horizontally across the geography of state republics. While it is unsurprising, on the one hand, that consistent narrative threads about

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<sup>46</sup>Aside from the nationalities press, national language newspapers published in the republics widely varied in circulation (Hopkins 192-93).

celebrities thrived across Thaw-era periodicals, on the other hand Dem'ianenko's promotion across publications suggests that the cultural authorities had a vested interest in the construction of film celebrities.

The attention of Soviet media to film actors differed from free-press systems in another significant way. Although as Ellis highlights, stars' private lives serve as an enormous selling point in mass-produced papers under a practicing free press, the private lives of stars and celebrities were hardly—if ever—probed or covered in the Soviet news.<sup>47</sup> Dyer argues that,

The complex way in which we produce and reproduce the world in technologically developed societies involves the ways in which we separate ourselves into public and private persons, producing and consuming persons and so on, and the ways in which we as people negotiate and cope with those divisions. Stars are about all of that, and are one of the most significant ways we have for making sense of it all. That is why they matter to us, and why they are worth thinking about. (*Heavenly Bodies* 2)

Dyer, moreover, elaborates on the division of the public from the private with respect to the individual's role in society. "The private self," he writes, "is further represented through a set of oppositions that stem from the division of the world into private and public spaces, a way of organizing space that in turn relates to the idea of the separability of the individual and society" (*Heavenly Bodies* 10).

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<sup>47</sup>"Mass newspapers use stars for their own ends: they can be the occasion of scandals, and they provide a repertory of figures who are in the public eye, yet have no political power. Stars provide newspapers with the vehicle for discussion of sexuality, of the domain of the personal and the familial . . . Stars have a smoldering function: they hold the news and the personal together by being both public and intimate, by being news only in so far as they are persons" (Ellis 91).

In the Soviet case, advertising the private affairs of public figures was not in state media interests since the private sphere was often meant to be officially obscured by the cultural apparatus. In her study of Soviet everyday life, Susan E. Reid notes that “the Khrushchev era was characterized by contradiction, and its treatment of domestic ‘private life’ was no exception . . . Domestic, everyday life was not to be closeted away from public life and collective concerns, but part of a continuum: the boundaries were supposed to be transparent and permeable” (145-7).<sup>48</sup> While stars in the capitalist context may be unstable and contradictory figures, the notion of the erasure between the public and private in and of itself provided the means for an environment in

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<sup>48</sup>Reid also writes that “attention to the home and simultaneous denial of its sanctity and seclusion reflects the paradox that the Khrushchev regime’s mass housing campaign, launched in 1957 on the basis of industrial principles of standard plans and factory prefabrication of standard modules, made the nuclear family and normative household and primary unit of society, even as it pushed in other respects for collectivism . . . On the other hand—in line with the reinvigoration of Marxist ideological first principles, the renewed emphasis on participatory government and collectivism . . . With the imminent transition to full communism, the separation of the private from the public—which Marx and Engels had shown to be the original sin from which the division of labor and alienation ensued—would disappear, and the individual would recognize that his or her interests were identical with those of the collective . . . With the transition to communism everyone would voluntarily become submerged in the ‘all-embracing social fabric of the community. There *will be* privacy but the *meaningless choice of privacy* is insignificant when contrasted with the choice of individual fulfillment through participation within the group” (145-7; emphasis in original).

which film celebrities could thrive as Soviet role models. For the purposes of state newspapers, these figures were not only of interest as public personas, they *were* the public.

In Dem'ianenko's case, the notion of the star as both ordinary and extraordinary was not reflected in curiosity about his public versus private life—since that boundary did not officially exist—but rather through friction between his (and Shurik's) status as an individual and his rapport with the Soviet community. As Xiaoning Lu has written with respect to the film star in the PRC, stardom “encapsulates issues such as the paradoxical coexistence of individualism and collectivism in the socialist state and the dynamic relationship between the public figure and the masses” (98). This coexistence captures the issues relevant to discourse around the Soviet film celebrity, particularly the role of the individual within the collective, that figures like Dem'ianenko were meant to embody and simultaneously traverse.

### 3.1 GAIDAI AND THAW-ERA CINEMA

“Shurik” took cinema by storm as part of the ten golden years of Leonid Gaidai's filmmaking. Dem'ianenko played the role of the nerdy student scientist in three of the director's blockbuster comedies between 1965-73: *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* (*Operatsia Y i drugie prikliucheniia Shurika*, 1965), *The Captive of the Caucasus or the New Adventures of Shurik* (*Kavkazskaia plennitsa, ili novye priklucheniia Shurika*, 1967), and *Ivan Vasil'evich Changes Profession* (*Ivan Vasil'evich meniaet professiiu*, 1973) (Figure 10). Each of these films realized enormous success at the box office but Dem'ianenko's career as a creative actor, along with the production of Gaidai's slapstick comedies, sharply declined beginning in the early 1970s. The

actor was unable to find work in other film genres, and was also unable to separate his name and face from the Shurik character.



**Figure 10: Screenshot from Leonid Gaidai's *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* (1966), taken by author**

Gaidai occupies an exceptional place in the history of Soviet cinema and popular culture, as he had a strong background in comedy filmmaking that he inherited from the 1920s film traditions (“Leonid Gaidai”). At the State Institute for Cinematography (VGIK), he was the student of two well-known early Soviet film directors, Iakov Protazanov and Boris Barnet. The latter, famous for directing one of the seminal comedies of early Soviet cinema, *The Girl with the Hat Box* (*Devuska s korobkoi*, 1927), enlisted Gaidai's help in making *Liana* in 1955. Gaidai's

slapstick films drew on earlier traditions of Soviet comedy from the 1920s as well as Western comedic influences.<sup>49</sup>

Gaidai's creative work brought new energy to the film industry, especially since the early years of the Thaw were largely dominated by war-themed melodramas. As the primary genre of the 1950s, Soviet melodramas were also more easily exported than comedies and satires which tended to concentrate on social transgressions. In the mid-1960s, however, comedies began to make their way to the cinematic forefront and by 1965, *Operation Y* was one of four comedies that opened on Soviet screens. The release of this film was accompanied by El'dar Riazanov's *Give Me the Complaint Book* (*Daite zhalobnuiu knigu*), Villen Azarov's *Green Light* (*Zelenyi ogonek*), and Leonid Bykov's *Zaichik* (Woll 197-9). Riazanov's films were also extraordinarily well-attended but his comedies "tended to mock social vices and therefore relied heavily on a goal-oriented ideological narrative" (Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attractions" 456).<sup>50</sup> As the Soviet film community reorganized the objectives and conventions of comedy, critics like Rostislav Iurenev maintained that well-developed narrative and a strong satirical element were the distinguishing characteristics of the genre (Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attractions" 457). Satires, moreover, were less dubious and "safer" to produce. Such films as *Girl Without an Address* (*Devushka bez adresa*, 1957), *How Robinson was Created* (*Kak sozdavalsia Robinzon*, 1961), *Give Me the Complaint Book* (*Daite zhalobnuiu knigu*, 1965), *Beware of the Car* (*Beregis' avtomobilia*, 1966), and *Zigzag*

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<sup>49</sup>When preparing to make a new film, Gaidai revisited two Charlie Chaplin productions each time: *City Lights* (1931) and *Modern Times* (1936) (Prokhorov, "Diamond Arm" 133).

<sup>50</sup>Prokhorov argues that this is one reason Riazanov's films never realized the box-office success of Gaidai's in the 1960s.

of *Luck* (*Zigzag udachi*, 1968) experienced popularity, but the films Riazanov made during the 1970s were his biggest hits in terms of viewership.<sup>51</sup>

In contradistinction to Riazanov's works, Gaidai's films abandoned the Stalinist creed. As Birgit Beumers writes, "were popular because they replaced the coherent ideological narrative of Soviet film with an episodic and fragmented world that corresponded more closely to reality than the varnished fairy tales of the Stalinist period" ("Soviet and Russian Blockbusters" 451).<sup>52</sup> His comedies did not employ cause-and-effect stories, but favored visual humor over verbal expression, the human body as comic attraction, and invited the viewer into a world of tricks, slapstick jokes, dizzying chase scenes, and sight gags rather than a logical and articulate narrative (Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attractions" 456-8). His films underscored the contemporary socialist reality parallel to the myth of the ideal Soviet man and emerged without traces of melodramas and

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<sup>51</sup>This especially applies to Riazanov's romantic comedies: *The Irony of Fate* (*Ironiia sud'by*, 1975) and *Office Romance* (*Sluzhebnyi roman*, 1977). See Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attractions" 456.

<sup>52</sup>Gaidai himself noted that, "Конечно, законы жанра существуют, но я все время изобретаю велосипед. И борюсь с тем строгим гражданином, который нет нет да и появляется в каждом из нас, требуя, чтобы все было по правилам, по законам, по жанрам" (Пупшева, Иванов, и Цукерман 152).

"Of course laws of genre exist, but I am always reinventing the wheel. And I struggle with the strict citizen who occasionally appears in each of us demanding that all be according to the rules, the laws, the genres" (translation mine).

their ideologies. They were mostly Horatian satires that were useful and entertaining, and that employed mild, general jokes at the social and political.<sup>53</sup>

The success of Gaidai's films in which Dem'ianenko starred can, on the one hand, be attributed to their contrast with, as Prokhorov writes, "the verbal instantiations of official Soviet ideology within narrative-driven Soviet cinema" ("Cinema of Attractions" 456). Through his visual style of comedy, Gaidai was able to emphasize humor towards the social order while still having "ухитрился создать редкий феномен по-настоящему смешной кинокомедии в стране, где смех традиционно устремлялся по нисходящей" (Dobrotvorskii).<sup>54</sup> These films, on the other hand, succeeded because he regularly recycled Shurik and his audience's favorite characters. His earlier short film, *The Dog Barbos and the Unusual Race* (*Pes Barbos i neobychnyi kross*, 1961) introduced his version of the Three Stooges to Soviet filmmaking, each of whom became a celebrity in his own right. Played by Georgii Vitsin, Iurii Nikulin, and Evgenii Morgunov (known as ViNiMor) the trio appeared as the watermark of Gaidai's comedies. They were the bumbling villains that his scattered plots demanded, but even more they were personalities on which viewers eagerly depended for entertainment. The ViNiMor characters did not fit with the reality that existed in comparison to the Soviet values that were perpetuated, which made them—and Gaidai's

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<sup>53</sup>In reference to Gaidai, Georgii Daneliia and himself, El'dar Riazanov remarked in 1976 that, "just because we make comedies does not mean we do not raise important, socially meaningful issues" ("Troie smeishchikhsia muzhchin" 8).

<sup>54</sup>"The wherewithal to create the rare phenomenon of a genuinely funny comedy in a country where traditional laughter had subsided" (translation mine).

films—appealing for Soviet audiences. More importantly, however, they served as foils for Shurik who, as their opponent, could be modeled and commended as the ideal citizen.

The popularity of these comedies was of interest to the state because of their commercial success. From Stalin's death in 1953 and until the Soviet Union collapsed, officials experimented with different policies in the cinema industry in order to control cultural politics. This was achieved through shelving, censoring, and cutting films, as well as through various measures in distribution; until 1964-5 every aspect of film production was a packaged process. In the mid-1960s Goskino Chairman, Aleksei Romanov and Lev Kulidzhanov, the First Secretary of the Filmmakers Union, concentrated on increasing the commercial effectiveness of films because it was the form of the arts that provided steady return. They suggested experimenting with a system in which a film studio's profit could be connected with box-office receipts and maintain certain levels of artistic independence (First 325-6). Headed by Chukhrai (artistic director), Vladimir Pozner (executive director), and Konstantin Simonov (head of the script department), the Mos'film Experimental Studios' strategy created a rise in productivity but also an enormous increase in viewership and box-office returns. Several of the most popular Soviet films, including many of Gaidai's, were created in the Experimental Studios, corresponding with a moment in the film industry that promoted a successful experiment in filmmaking, in celebrity-building, and one that had not been attempted in the past.<sup>55</sup>

The Experimental Studio was able to succeed for as long as it did largely due to Romanov, who had been the former deputy chairman of the propaganda department of the Central

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<sup>55</sup>Consider, for example, Vladimir Motyl's *White Sun of the Desert* (*Beloe solntse pustyni*, 1970) as a popular comedy made in the Experimental Studios.

Committee.<sup>56</sup> He was removed from his position in 1972 and replaced by Filipp Ermash, who favored a more “normalized” economic plan for the film industry and stricter political and cultural policies in the wake of the Brezhnev years (First 325-6).<sup>57</sup> Having not functioned under the jurisdiction of other film studios in the Soviet system and operating on a relatively “free” supply and demand model, when Ermash came to power the works previously brought into production were erased and the closure of the studio was essentially revenge for its efforts to be creative in the final years of the Thaw.<sup>58</sup> The returns from Gaidai’s films began to stagnate in the 1970s with the clamping down on creative innovations in production. The mid-1960s through early 1970s was a window of immense creativity for Gaidai’s work and for the life of Dem’ianenko as a celebrity persona.

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<sup>56</sup>For an account of Gaidai’s interactions with Romanov, see Frolov, 94.

<sup>57</sup>Despite the fact that in the 1960s the state had its own interest in promoting the popularity of comedy films, “In 1972, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [TsK KPSS] issued a decree ‘On measures for the further development of Soviet film,’ which articulated the general direction the Soviet film industry should take in the coming years. It instructed Goskino and the USSR Union of Filmmakers to raise the ideological and creative level of film and to introduce long-range production plans based on film themes” (Michaels 346).

<sup>58</sup>Prokhorov argues that the studio’s closure was attributed, in part, to the fact that its success was a supposed embarrassment to other Soviet film studios whose work was overshadowed by the films being produced at the Experimental headquarters (“Diamond Arm” 129).

### 3.2 DEM'IANENKO AS STAR ON SCREEN

Although Dem'ianenko was already a known actor prior to his career under Gaidai's direction, his role as Shurik defined his entire career. He was one of only seven students admitted to the Lunacharskii State Institute for the Theatre Arts (GITIS) in 1955 after failing an audition for Aleksandr Ostrovskii's *The Forest* at the prestigious Moscow Art Theatre in his teenage years (Razzakov "Operatsiia Y"). During his time at the Institute, Mos'film directors Aleksandr Alov and Vladimir Naumov recognized Dem'ianenko's potential for roles in film acting, and they asked him to play the part of the humble man, Mitia, in the third segment of their trilogy, *Wind (Veter, 1958)*. When he graduated from GITIS in 1959, Dem'ianenko accepted a job in the Mayakovsky Theatre, formerly run by Meyerhold. He discovered, however, that he was unable to obtain serious roles in the theatre, and by 1960 he began to explore possibilities for his career as a film actor.

Between 1961 and 1964, Dem'ianenko worked for various directors and film studios while based in Leningrad. Alov and Naumov cast him in the starring role in *Peace to Him Who Enters (Mir vkhodiashchemu, 1961)*, a drama that dealt with Soviet soldiers rescuing a pregnant, German civilian. The film, however, was accused of showing the "expressionistic untruth about the war," and was almost entirely banned from being distributed. It was eventually screened mainly in the provinces, with a print run of only three hundred seventy copies (Razzakov "Operatsiia Y"). Dem'ianenko's role in the film, consequently, was only known to a small domestic audience even though it allowed him to establish his credentials in a serious role in the industry abroad.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*Peace to Him Who Enters* was screened at the Venice Film Festival where it won the Pasinetti Award for Best Foreign Film as well as a special prize for Best Director.

In searching for an actor to play the role of Shurik in *Operation Y*, Gaidai began to pursue someone who mirrored himself, both in appearance and in his reserved personality. Remembering the process, Gaidai's wife recalls that, "Спустя многие годы я вижу теперь, что Шурик—это сам Леонид Иович. Все его поступки, жесты...Конечно, Демьяненко преломил их через себя" (Pupsheva, Ivanov, i Tsukerman 136).<sup>60</sup> The conflation of Dem'ianenko with Shurik occurred because he was typecast in the role as a result of the success of the comedies being produced. The extensive labor the director put towards finding an actor that met his standards speaks to the fact that Gaidai himself considered the role an exceptional one. He conducted over one hundred screen tests for the part before a member of the film crew finally suggested that he contact a young actor in Leningrad to try out for the Shurik role ("Leonid Gaidai").<sup>61</sup> Gaidai left

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<sup>60</sup>"After many years I see now that Shurik is Leonid Iovich himself. All of his actions, gestures...Of course Dem'ianenko refracted them through himself" (translation mine).

Moreover, "В свою очередь Леониду Иовичу очень понравился Демьяненко. Настолько, что под впечатлением от его обаяния режиссер «перекрестил своего героя по имени исполнителя роли. Владик «умер», родился Шурик. Его единственным внешним отличием от Саши Демьяненко стал цвет волос" (Пупшева, Иванов, и Цукерман 136).

"In his own turn Leonid Iovich really liked Dem'ianenko. So much so that under the influence of his charm the director named his hero after the performer. Vladik died and Shurik was born. His only external difference from Sasha Dem'ianenko became the hair color" (translation mine).

<sup>61</sup>Gaidai was known for being highly selective in the casting process. When the character, Nina, was cast in *Captive of the Caucasus*, Gaidai performed over five hundred screen tests before selecting the actress, Natal'ia Varlei, for the role.

for Leningrad and returned to Moscow with Dem'ianenko a few days later. Echoing Gaidai's sentiment, Dem'ianenko read the script for Shurik and was instantly sold on playing the part, stating that, “Я как прочел сценарий "Операции "Ы", понял, что фильм обречен на успех, - ничего подобного в нашем кино тогда не было” (Razzakov, “Operatsiia Y”).<sup>62</sup>

As a character in Gaidai's films, Shurik showed little emotional development or maturity. Still remaining true to the values of Thaw cinema, he had a child-like demeanor that favored the qualities of honesty and innocence. Prokhorov argues that Shurik was a two-dimensional figure who more closely resembled the simpleton of the folktale and who became a contemporary version of Ivan-the-Fool.<sup>63</sup> By adopting aspects of the folkloric narrative, Gaidai was able to emphasize

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<sup>62</sup>“I read the script for *Operation Y* and understood that the film was destined for success, that there was nothing in our cinema like it” (translation mine).

<sup>63</sup>The “positive adolescent hero is parodied and becomes a modern version of Ivan-the-Fool, such as the student Shurik, who—like his folk ancestor—is incapable of any transformation until he is assisted by miraculous coincidence and modern versions of magic helpers . . . Shurik succeeds only by luck and chance and not because of his ingenuity or out of the iron necessity of history” (“Adolescent and Child” 126). In Andrei Siniavskii's conception of Ivan the Fool, the character “is distinct in that, his actions are out of place, embarrassing, impractical, and senseless which is what makes him a figure of fun . . . We even begin to sympathize with the Fool because he is so simple, truthful and ingenuous. He is the victim of his own openheartedness—an openheartedness that is measured by his stupidity, by his ignorance of the most basic concepts. This is why, somewhere in mid-story, the Fool's luck suddenly turns and becomes an extraordinarily successful person. His luck changes not because he is wiser, but because he is

Shurik's honest values in the films themselves rather than the verbal declarations that had dominated Soviet cinema through ideology:

Shurik's engagement in slapstick conflicts with comic villains reenacted the war ethos of "us" versus "them," while his primary occupation as a student positioned him favorably in the realm of scholarship and science. Shurik's nerdiness, however, was only a contemporary disguise for the popular hero of Russian fairy tales, Ivan the Fool (the youngest of three brothers who turns out to be the luckiest and most successful of the siblings) . . . Gaidai never needed a wise madman who speaks the truth or even speaks at all, but he was always in need of an "action madman" to generate the comic turns for his anarchic comedies. (Prokhorov, "Cinema of Attractions" 468)

The qualities that comprised the Fool, however, were the same characteristics that Soviet newspapers used in their command of Shurik as the ideal Soviet citizen. While Shurik was meant to be satirical, publicity around the films attempted to fashion him as a more earnest, upstanding hero.

Although the success of the Thaw's most celebrated films, including Gaidai's, was often officially attributed to directors—particularly in newspapers—the media inadvertently fashioned film stars and celebrities by way of those directors. Publicity that exclusively showcased the actor was rare, but one other type of publication did feature Dem'ianenko as a focal point of cinematic success. *Soviet Screen* (*Sovetskii ekran*) was the only film publication that dealt with this matter, and along with providing a platform for popular culture created for mass readership, it facilitated conversations on favorite actors and featured viewer surveys. Published jointly by the Union of Filmmakers and Goskino, the State Committee for Cinematography, the journal cultivated popularity with readers by appealing to what the majority of filmgoers were watching while still

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still doing the most idiotic things . . . Thus idiotic behavior turns out to be an indispensable condition of happiness—the condition for the coming of divine or magic powers" (37- 38).

aiming to comply with state sanctioned interests. The journal followed Dem'ianenko's acting career from 1962, when an issue featured a short account of his upbringing and early work in the Soviet theatre ("Aleksandr Dem'ianenko"). The seventh issue of *Soviet Screen* in 1967, printed after the release of *Captive of the Caucasus*, featured a shot of Dem'ianenko with his co-star Natal'ia Varlei (Nina) on its cover (Figure 11).

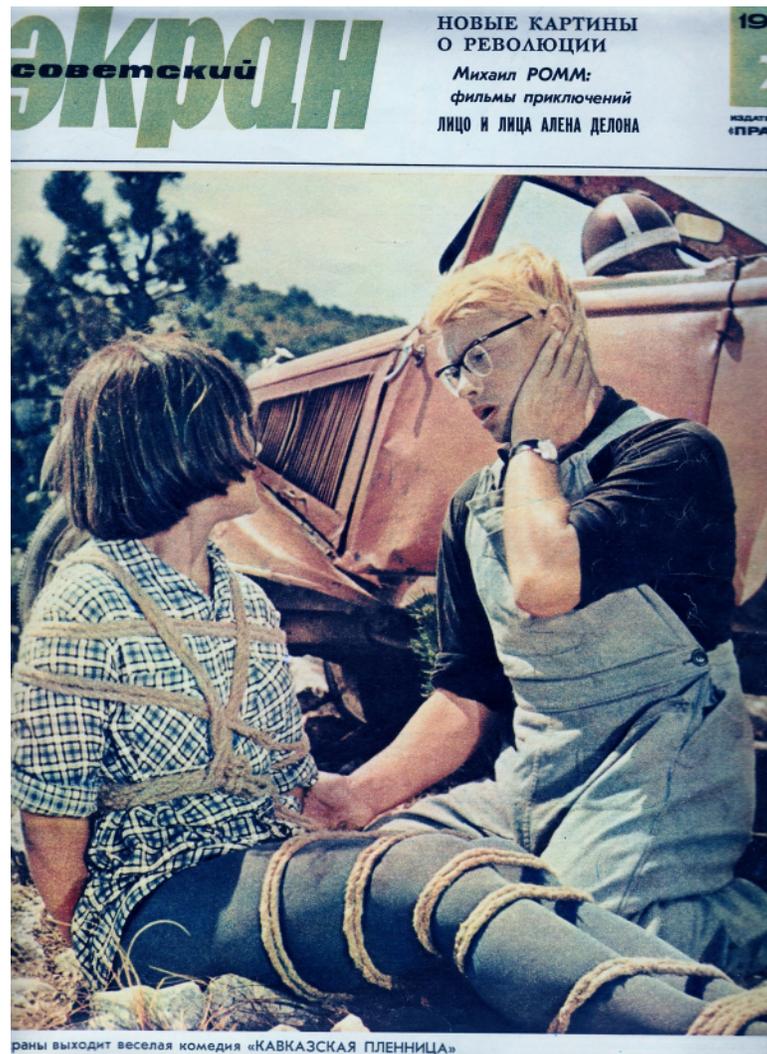


Figure 11: Cover of *Sovetskii ekran* 7 (1967)

The image is taken from the end of the film after Nina is bridenapped, tied up by her captors, and Shurik chases their car on white horseback through windy mountainous terrain. Once he catches their vehicle, which screeches to a halt at the edge of a steep cliff, he pulls Nina from the car, places her on the ground, and she regains consciousness. Dem'ianenko is clearly the focus of the image, while Varlei is turned away from the camera. Dem'ianenko is shown gazing down at her, and expresses concern through his facial expression and body language; his eyes are completely fixed on Nina's, his mouth slightly agape, his palm resting on his left cheek. The reader is not privy to the details of Nina's face, as her hair covers the side of her right cheek, but only to the position of her body. She is postured sitting upright, her hands are tied behind her back, and the rest of her body is knotted in rope from legs to shoulders. Dem'ianenko kneels before her on the edge of the cliff, his right hand positioned on her elbow and his knees delicately turned inward towards her.

Dem'ianenko's dress, moreover, speaks to Shurik's role in the films and his celebrity text. He is clad in overalls, an article of clothing that may be associated with a more rural, simple way of life, but that also suggests the unification of two major types of laborers in the Soviet Union—farmers and factory workers. The overalls, in this way, signify Shurik's simple nature, but also that he is a Soviet hero. His glasses, the trademark of his character, remind the viewer of his role as a student, but also represent one of the tropes of the folk hero—that he is wise, albeit not in the rational or traditional sense. Readers of *Soviet Screen* in 1967 would have recognized Shurik by his glasses, an accessory that later became ensconced with Dem'ianenko's celebrity image, as he also wore them off screen. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner discuss this phenomenon through the idea of conceptual blending. “Dramatic performances,” they write, “are deliberate blends of a living person with an identity. They give us a living person in one input and a different living

person, an actor, in another. The person on stage is a blend of these two. The character portrayed may of course be entirely fictional, but there is still a space, a fictional one, in which that person is alive. In the blend, the person sounds and moves like the actor and is where the actor is...” (266). In drawing attention to the film’s director, together with images of Dem’ianenko, *Sovetskii ekran* provided an opportunity for viewers to embrace the qualities of the Shurik figure—and therefore Dem’ianenko—an actor whose character came to be associated with Gaidai’s filmic style and embodied the values that defined the Thaw.<sup>64</sup> Soviet newspapers offer an even more compelling snapshot of Dem’ianenko’s star-turned-celebrity image as it was crafted at the height of his career after the release of *Operation Y*, providing an understanding of the Soviet film persona that media authorities wished to construct, but that also corresponded with the values of Thaw cinema more broadly.

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<sup>64</sup>The article written on the film claimed that, “У Леонида Гайдая есть редчайший дар – чувство смеха . . . Гайдай успешно и талантливо утверждает у нас традицию самой «смехопроизводительной» комедии – эксцентрической. Утверждает, развивает, и есть надежда, что укоренит ее окончательно. Беру на себя смелость сказать, что этот тип комедии – один из самых необходимейших нашему кино жанров” (Obraztsova 10) “Leonid Gaidai has a rare gift - a sense of laughter. . . Gaidai is successfully and giftedly building the tradition of the most laughter-producing comedies—eccentric comedies. He has established it and he makes sure that it keeps evolving, and there is hope that it will take root. I am at liberty to say that this type of comedy is one of the most needed in our movie genres” (translation mine).

### 3.3 SHURIK IN SOVIET NEWSPAPERS

Recalling Ponce de Leon's study regarding the celebrity's relationship to publicity, first mentioned in the Introduction of this dissertation, his argument that media visibility is the central aspect of the celebrity text provides a touchstone for interrogating the interest of the Soviet press in the construction of the socialist celebrity image.<sup>65</sup> Dem'ianenko's strength as a celebrated public figure rested in his visibility as the embodiment of Thaw values like honesty, sincerity, and a promoter of a good work ethic with a sense of justice. Although the image of Dem'ianenko as Shurik and as a celebrity remained steadfast after the release of *Operation Y*, newspaper discourse around this film is particularly informative with respect to the way that the press canonized the Shurik figure. As *Operation Y* hit the big screen, Soviet newspapers from across the state constructed Shurik's celebrity text through the framework of the individual within the collective in three types of narratives: the ability to re-educate the delinquent citizen, his virtuous characteristics and values, and his status more broadly as a positive hero and role model. Although these three types of depictions often overlap, they are usually tied to a particular scene in *Operation Y* and the trope of re-education (*perevospitanie*).

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<sup>65</sup>“recognizing the pivotal role played by the media is the essential starting point for any analysis of celebrity. What distinguishes celebrities from the anonymous masses is visibility, a kind of visibility made possible by the media and shaped by journalistic conventions that make celebrities seem at once extraordinary and real: complex, interesting “human beings” whose unique talents and gifts are accompanied by traits that are commonplace and familiar to ordinary people” (13).

The state reimagined the notion of re-education in the Khrushchev era when, as Miriam Dobson argues, “the party returned to ideas of correction *within* society.”<sup>66</sup> She notes that, “In keeping with the view that as society progressed, citizens became more politically conscious and socially engaged, the party hoped that the community would help re-educate offenders. Articles and books informed citizens of their duty not only to pay attention to their own *byt* but also to monitor others’ moral transgressions . . . Under Khrushchev the party was thus still committed to building a new world and still determined to transform human nature” (9). Integrating re-education with the image of a film star provided an approach to use the popularity of a celebrity for the face of the initiative.



**Figure 12: Screenshot from Leonid Gaidai’s *Operation Y and Shurik’s Other Adventures* (1966), taken by author; Shurik and Fedia on the bus**

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<sup>66</sup>See Dobson’s introduction for a review on the evolution of the term in Soviet cultural history (1-20).

*Operation Y*, a three-part almanac film, introduces the re-education trope in the first novella as Shurik boards a bus in Moscow. The oversized drunk bully, Fedia (Aleksi Smirnov), refuses to give up his seat to a pregnant woman. Seeing that his seat is reserved for the disabled, Shurik disguises himself with sunglasses, pretends to be visually impaired, and once Fedia is implored to vacate the seat Shurik offers the woman the space (Figure 12). Fedia and Shurik get into a scuffle and Fedia is sentenced to 15 days (15 *sutok*). He is assigned to a job on a construction site where Shurik works but the site director gives Shurik the same assignment. A lengthy game of cat and mouse ensues, and Shurik and Fedia engage in several chase scenes dominated by bodily sight gags. By the end of the segment Shurik thwarts Fedia's plan to take revenge, and the rogue becomes re-educated (Figure 13).



**Figure 13: Screenshot from Leonid Gaidai's *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* (1966), taken by author; Shurik reeducates Fedia**

The first episode of the film was a popular topic in newspaper promotion of Shurik, as it was a scene that could stress socialist virtues: the young Soviet hero, the individual who rehabilitates the old, child-like delinquent for the sake of the collective. An excerpt from an article promoting the film in *Pskovskaia Pravda* is representative of press materials that fostered the Shurik image together with the re-education narrative:

Мы, товарищи, иногда встречаем еще и такое. Городской автобус переполнен, а на переднем сиденье, заняв оба места, восседает полупьяный и нахальный Верзила . . . Он грубит, оскорбляет людей, но большинство пассажиров старается не связываться с хулиганом. (А такое разве не бывает?) В этом же автобусе едет Шурик. В конечном счете ситуация складывается так, что Верзила, отбывающий пятнадцатисуточное наказание на стройке, попадает напарником к Шурику, не без помощи которого пьяница попал за решетку. Огромный детина демонстрирует щедедушному Шурику свою силу: вяжет арматуру, растягивает, как меха гармони, отопительные батареи, многозначительно интересуется, бывают ли на стройке несчастные случаи...Исход борьбы нам ясен. Посрамленный и прирученный Верзила надолго запомнит урок, преподнесенный ему Шуриком. В этой новелле, кстати, не может остаться незамеченной и такая мысль: нередко случается у нас, что для «нашалившего» хулигана наказание в 15 суток превращается в дополнительный двухнедельный отпуск. Отсюда напрашивается соответствующий практический вывод.<sup>67</sup> (Garin)

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<sup>67</sup>We, comrades, sometimes meet such situations. The city bus is overcrowded, but in the front seat, taking both places, is a half-drunk oversized bully. . . He is rude, insults people, but most of the passengers try not to engage with the hooligan. (And is this such a rare occurrence?) Shurik rides this same bus. Eventually, the situation is such that the big bully, who is serving a sentence of 15 days at a construction site, becomes Shurik's partner and it wasn't without Shurik's help that the drunk found himself behind bars in the first place. The huge bully shows the frail Shurik his strength: he ties rebar, expands radiators like accordion bellows, and keeps asking whether 'accidents' happen often at the construction site. The outcome of the struggle is clear to us. The shamed and tamed bully will long remember the lessons Shurik taught him. In this novella, by

Three important concepts run through this excerpt with respect to Shurik and the re-education of the unruly citizen. The author, first, draws a direct connection between the sequence of events in the scene and the reality of Soviet life (*А такое разве не бывает?*) while directly addressing his readers as “comrades” and collapsing the imagined space between the newspaper platform and its readership. He, second, describes Shurik’s behavior in contradistinction to that of the drunk Fedia. Shurik’s “strength” suggests his meritorious civic conduct. As a Soviet citizen, Shurik is noted simply to have performed his public duty. Fedia’s behavior is described as an unsurprising occurrence in Soviet public life, which in turn casts Shurik’s actions as exemplary not only for fellow citizens but as a prescriptive lesson for members of the collective. The author, third, suggests that Fedia becomes re-educated as a direct result of Shurik’s actions. Although the film is a comedy, the article emphasizes that such matters in society cannot be taken lightly or without punishment, reimagining the notion of Shurik as a Fool and paving space for him to become a virtuous hero and exemplar of what it means to live in a model socialist society.

Other articles focused more on Shurik’s honesty, humble nature, and intolerance of injustice as his most notable traits. While casting him as a role model for the collective, he is also illustrated as an ordinary individual. In the following articles from newspapers based in Moscow and Sevastopol', Shurik is portrayed as a hero in opposition to Fedia’s deplorable behavior.

Шурик—обычный рабочий парнишка . . . Работает он на строительстве жилого дома . . . И частенько попадает в разного рода переделки. Иногда из-за любопытства,

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the way, this idea cannot go unnoticed: it often happens that the naughty bully's punishment of 15 days turns into a two-week vacation. From here we can draw practical conclusions.

иногда из-за характера. Дело в том, что Шурик предельно честен. Он не может терпеть несправедливости, в какой бы форме она проявлялась (Ziukov).<sup>68</sup>

Шурик—честен, справедлив, и он не может остаться в стороне. В результате у Шурика – синяк под глазом, а хулиган получает пятнадцать суток . . . Но таков уж характер у Шурика--не отступать ни перед чем, бороться всеми силами против несправедливости (“Veselo, Smeshno, Ostroumno”).<sup>69</sup>

In the first example, Shurik is described as an ordinary person, but also as an honest citizen who cannot tolerate the injustices he witnesses in the community. The idea of progress and perseverance, especially in the initiative to re-educate a fallen comrade, casts Shurik as the paragon of civic behavior. In the second example, the language used to illustrate the hero continues to channel the socialist morale: the Soviet citizen is expected to be honest and sincere, and with that designation comes the *duty* to fight social problems for the good of the collective. In this description Shurik is a figure who conveys that the film celebrity was to be, on the one hand, an ordinary Soviet citizen and, on the other hand, a model for civic virtues and a pedagogical star from whom audiences could learn.

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<sup>68</sup>“Shurik is an ordinary working fellow . . . he works on a home construction site . . . and he often gets tangled in different sorts of altercations. Sometimes it's out of curiosity, sometimes because of his character. The fact is that Shurik is flat-out honest. He cannot tolerate injustice in any form it may manifest itself” (translation mine).

<sup>69</sup>“Shurik is honest, just, and he cannot stay on the sidelines. The result is that Shurik gets a black eye and the hooligan gets 15 days. But this is Shurik’s nature—he will not back down before anything, will fight tooth and nail against injustice” (translation mine).

In his discussion of the term, “ordinary,” Nick Couldry argues that, “The word ‘ordinary’ is . . . ambiguous, covering both what is shared by everyone (‘the regular, the customary’) and what is ranked lower in a hierarchy. Affirming ‘the ordinary’ (as shared) can have remarkable resonances . . . but the term’s usage also crosses many hierarchical divisions. In any particular case (‘ordinary life’, ‘ordinary world’, ‘ordinary people’), more than one distinction may overlap” (353). Shurik as an “ordinary” citizen dovetails with the notion that the socialist celebrity was meant to serve as an example for the collective. That the ordinary celebrity could bridge echelons of society, including those citizens who were deemed as candidates for re-education, created a useful model for Soviet media in constructing Dem’ianenko’s celebrity text. Couldry writes, moreover, that the media/ordinary division:

symbolically categorises *people*. It implies that the type of person who is ‘in the media’ is different in kind from the person who is not . . . “ordinary people” are not expected to be the same as “media people”: certainly they are not expected to have the skills or characteristics which being in the media is assumed to involve . . . in news coverage, “ordinary people” appear as agents only if they have done something “especially remarkable” . . . When they do so, they indirectly confirm the usual distance of “ordinary people” from media attention, even as they appear to challenge it. (354; emphasis in original)

Dem’ianenko as Shurik provided a path for bridging the gap between the media and the ordinary person. As a famous figure who played an ordinary role, he was the model for the narrative that socialist citizens symbolize progress, achievement, as well as a figure who could reach the public by traversing the boundary between films and audiences: “А в том, что Шурик-положительный, сомневаться не приходится: он честен, трудолюбив, скромн, находчив, умен . . . Роль Шурика--это не просто удача молодого актера А. Демьяненко. Это рождение нового героя советской кинокомедии--результат творчества и труда сценаристов, постановщика и актера. Очень хочется, чтобы новорожденный рос и не забывал почаще

встречаться со зрителями” (“Rozhdenie geroia”).<sup>70</sup> This excerpt focuses on Shurik’s ability to close the divide between the media world and the ordinary person, an implication that is confirmed through the notion—and the call—that the actor himself meet with his audience. Such a moment suggests that Shurik should not only be a figure on celluloid but an example for those who watch him perform reputable qualities on screen: he is not only honest, but he is clever, hardworking, and humble. The character is likened to the collective of the film’s creative effort and as the new hero of film comedy, Shurik has the special ability to be an example for society.

As Hopkins’s study of the Soviet press indicates, mass media was coded as the press of the people: “Soviet newspapers, magazines, radio, and more recently television are the extensions of Everyman . . . Almost every issue of *Pravda*, official newspaper of the Soviet Communist Party, carries a front-page photograph glorifying the common man” (19). In the following examples, the idea that Shurik is the role model for the everyman, or the common man, materializes through the notion that he is a positive hero more broadly and carries virtues admired by and modeled for the public.

Мы симпатизировали благородному, доверчивому, храброму юноше, курьезные похождения которого не могли не вызвать смех даже у меланхоликов. В Шурике мы находим нечто необыкновенное. Особенно замечателен образ, созданный артистом Александром Демьяненко. При всем своем легкомыслии, доверчивости, наивности герой Демьяненко Шурик в конце концов всегда выходит из трудного положения.

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<sup>70</sup>“And it cannot be doubted that Shurik is a positive hero: he is honest, hard-working, modest, resourceful, clever . . . Shurik's role is not simply the luck of the young actor A. Dem'ianenko. It is the birth of a new Soviet film comedy hero--the result of the creativity and labor of script writers, the director, and actor. I really hope that the newly born grows strong and meets with the audience as soon as possible” (translation mine).

Он—носитель добродетели. Поэтому его столкновение со всеми, у кого нечиста совесть,—неизбежно (Frolkin).<sup>71</sup>

В целом кинокомедия *Операция Ы и другие приключения Шурика* не только бичует недостатки, но и активно утверждает положительные стороны нашей жизни. Носителем добра, света и радости является Шурик, образ которого проходит через все три новеллы. Шурик -- исключительно скромный и отзывчивый и вместе с тем смелый и решительный парень. Он вступает в драку с обнаглевшим Верзилой, идет в бой с тремя ворами. И побеждает (Vesulas)!<sup>72</sup>

In the first article, readers understand that they are to become more like Shurik—virtuous and resourceful. In the second article, as a new positive hero he represents the model of the ideal citizen, a type of life that can only be attained through doing what is best for the collective. The virtuous citizen, despite his trials and tribulations, will always win, a metaphor for the triumph of socialism over other socio-cultural systems.

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<sup>71</sup>“We sympathized with the noble, trusting, brave young man whose curious adventures could not help but cause laughter, even for the melancholic. In Shurik we find something unusual. He is an especially remarkable image created by Aleksandr Dem'ianenko. For all of his frivolity, gullibility, naivety, the hero Shurik in the end always finds his way out of a difficult situation. He is the carrier of virtues. Therefore it is inevitable that he clashes with all who have a guilty conscience” (translation mine).

<sup>72</sup>“Overall, the comedy *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* not only admonishes flaws, but also actively asserts the positive sides of our lives. The carrier of good, light, and happiness is Shurik, whose image passes through all three novellas. Shurik is exceptionally humble and sympathetic and at the same time he is a courageous and decisive fellow. He enters into a scuffle with a big insolent fellow, goes into battle with three thieves. And he wins” (translation mine).

In an article from an Uzbek paper, published in 1966, the author directly argues against Shurik as the embodiment of the Fool character and maintains that luck does not play a role in the hero's success.

Все три новеллы объединены одним героем—это студент Шурик. Он выступает в качестве сугубо положительного лица, дающего бой хамству, спасающего государственное имущество, завоевывающего сердце милой девушки. Положительный герой комедии! Скажем честно: не часты здесь удачи. Тем принципиальнее работа Александра Демьяненко и авторов фильма, не поддавшихся опасению, что комедийность образа снизит его положительное звучание.<sup>73</sup>

The acknowledgement here of the discrepancy between traditional comedy heroes and Shurik suggests that the press recognized the importance of the new comedic persona at the box office and to Soviet cinema. The reference to Shurik saving state property links the virtues of his character directly with the cultural authorities and with the collective, creating an image of the individual who will do what is best for the community and for the love of the socialist system.

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<sup>73</sup>“All three novellas are united by one hero--the student Shurik. He acts as a purely positive personality, fighting rudeness, saving state property, and winning the heart of a dear girl. The positive hero of comedy! We can honestly say: success is not common here. That makes the work of Aleksandr Dem'ianenko and the film's authors that much more important, they did not succumb to the fear that the comedic image would diminish his positive image” (translation mine).

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

In an interview in 1971, already after Dem'ianenko's career began to decline, Gaidai discussed the use of Shurik in his films. The director's monologue provides an interesting understanding of how Dem'ianenko contributed to a blueprint for socialist celebrity figures.

—Многие персонажи ваших комедий кочуют из фильма в фильм. Знаменитая «троица» и студент Шурик...

—...Да. И не случайно. Эти типажи так хорошо сочетались, что в следующем фильме мне не захотелось расставаться с ними. А с Шуриком вышло вот как . . . в следующей комедии " Операция ы" мне захотелось показать и положительного героя, доброго человека. Тогда-то и появился студент Шурик--бессребреник, обаятельное и наивнейшее существо. И так как у комедии свои законы, то и положительный ее герой стал забавным.<sup>74</sup> (Nekhamkina)

Rather than creating Shurik as an escapist hero, the films themselves served to preserve the idea associated with the average citizen who lives in an imperfect world. Dem'ianenko, however, later blamed Shurik for his professional demise. In an expose on the actor, written almost nine years after his death, the magazine *TV-Park* noted that,

после фантастического успеха кинокомедии *Операция ы и другие приключения Шурика* у Александра Демьяненко не осталось собственного имени. До конца дней его звали Шуриком. Актер страшно раздражался, злился, но со временем махнул рукой . . . “Я в Шурике ничего не играл, просто существовал в предлагаемых

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<sup>74</sup>—“Many of your comedic characters roam from film to film. The famous troika and the student Shurik.”

—Yes. And it is not accidental. These types worked so well together that in the next film I did not want to part with them. And with Shurik it was this way. In the next film "Operation Y" I wanted to show the positive hero, a good man. It was then that Shurik came out--a disinterested, charming, and naive creature. And since comedy has its own laws, even its positive hero became funny” (translation mine).

обстоятельствах -- признавался актер за несколько месяцев до ухода из жизни. И вообще, я не считаю эту роль такой уж значимой в моей фильмографии. И не понимаю шумихи вокруг моей персоны. Как же никто не может понять, что «Операция «ы» и «Кавказская пленница» вовсе не «Мир входящему», не «Мой добрый папа» . . . Те роли оказались в забвении, зато все помнят Шурика. (Атмосфера Сентябрь 2008 55)<sup>75</sup>

This sketch of the star's attitude much later in his life, provides a snapshot of how Dem'ianenko ended up viewing his celebrity image. For him, the idea that Shurik could be more popular than any of the other characters he played is unexplainable. As he notes, all of his other heroes became swallowed up into the figure of Shurik. For Soviet film audiences, the popularity of the role certainly stemmed from the success of the comedic genre but audience reception was only one small aspect of the construction of Dem'ianenko as a celebrity figure. The press played a larger role in casting him as the face of the Soviet public.

While his career declined after the Shurik films, over the next two decades Dem'ianenko made his living doing voice-over work for films starring well-known US actors like Curtis. The

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<sup>75</sup>“After the fantastic success of the comedy film *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* Aleksandr Dem'ianenko lost his own name. Until the end of his days he was called Shurik. The actor was very annoyed and angered but he eventually threw his hands up in the air. In Shurik I did not play anything, I simply existed in the circumstances, the actor admitted a few months before his death. And in general I don't think it is such a significant role in my filmography. And I don't understand the fuss around my persona. It baffles me that people don't understand that *Operation Y* and *Prisoner of the Caucasus* are certainly no *Peace To Him who Enters*, nor *My Dear Father* . . . These roles fell into oblivion, but everyone remembers Shurik” (translation mine).

voiceover roles provided the only opportunity Dem'ianenko had to broaden the scope of his later career, the only productive space he enjoyed with respect to work in genres other than comedy. In the early 1990s, he was awarded the title of People's Artist of Russia and went back to work as an actor, this time in the comedy theatre for Iurii Aksenov in the play, *Weekend with Murder (Uikend s ubiistvom)*. In 1995, he played another role for the director Iurii Tomashevskii in the play, *Priiut Komedantov*. A few years afterward, he debuted in Iurii Belen'kii's television sitcom, *Klubnichka*.

Snapshots of his role as Shurik, however, did make their way onto the post-Soviet screen as an appeal to audience nostalgia. The New Year's variety series, *Old Songs About the Main Thing (Starye pesni o glavnom)*, directed and produced by a range of figures in the cinema and television industry, aired each year during the New Year and reflected on popular entertainment, popular figures, and stars of a Soviet decade. Dem'ianenko made a special appearance as an aged Shurik in *Old Songs About the Main Thing 2*. While walking through the snowy city streets, Dem'ianenko turns around as a woman calls for "Shurik." Her dog, instead, emerges from her apartment building and Dem'ianenko, the actor, is never acknowledged. This revived cameo of Shurik speaks to his beloved cult status but acknowledges its place in the past, just as the public, in turn, acknowledged his legacy but associated his work with a specific set of films from the Soviet era. Dem'ianenko's Shurik appearance in *Old Songs About the Main Thing 3* continued to capitalize on his status as an icon from the Soviet 1960s. In this installment of the series, Shurik appeared as a much older model of his days as a scientist through a plot in which the time machine from *Ivan Vasil'evich* is present in the Mos'film studios. These later cameo roles speak to the lasting popularity of Shurik, and at the same time situate him in a particular position with respect to cinema of the past.

Dem'ianenko as a celebrity captured the spirit of the Thaw and simultaneously represented the honest citizen living in Soviet reality, while the success of Gaidai's comedies provided an outlet for the film industry to receive steady returns and for the media to have a dialogue with filmgoers about laughter. Emphasizing that Shurik as a role model was an effective way to use the celebrity figure in collapsing the space between the cultural authorities and the public. He created a paradigm for the socialist celebrity through the representation of the individual's responsibility within the collective. For Dem'ianenko—and Shurik—that meant being typecast as the ideal citizen who could serve as a socialist paragon for Soviet audiences. Chapter Four explores another angle on posthumous stardom through the figure of the hockey player, Valerii Kharlamov, and the relationship between his celebrity text and contemporary Russian political and popular culture.

#### 4.0 *LEGEND NUMBER 17: VALERII KHARLAMOV'S POSTHUMOUS* **CELEBRITY STATUS**

Barack Obama's 2008 presidential platform ushered in renewed interest in the connection between celebrities and politics. His campaign speeches cleverly incorporated references to American popular music and his inauguration concert was memorably star-studded by established celebrities like Aretha Franklin and Stevie Wonder.<sup>76</sup> One can ironically turn to the 2016 US presidential race as an example of the even more recent resurgence in attention towards heads of state and celebrities. In October, US media outlets revealed that Donald Trump, the Republican Party's nominee for president, embraced the advantages of his celebrity status by publicly boasting of his past advances on women: "When you're a star they let you do it . . . You can do anything" (Fahrenheit). Trump's remarks speak to the union of politics and celebrity culture in the contemporary US, consecrated by capitalism and the free market, the media, celebrity endorsements of politicians, and politicians as celebrity figures. His observations, however, also serve as a touchstone for thinking about the cultural power of celebrities more broadly as they

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<sup>76</sup>"endorsements from Hollywood stars and Grammy-winning rock stars that accompanied Obama on the stump were brought to centre stage for the Inauguration concert, when the president was serenaded by Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen and Beyoncé . . . It was almost impossible to tell where the show business ended and the politics began" ("Celebrity Politics and Celebrity Politicians" 346).

pertain to political aims. As Philip Drake and Michael Higgins note, “the political sphere has become intertwined with celebrity and the value that celebrity endorsement can bring to political causes. Just as in advertising, gaining the support of prominent celebrities functions as a means of promoting product (in this case a political agenda) and leveraging media coverage” (88). Drake and Higgins’ suggestion that celebrities function as a kind of investment capital for the advancement of political (or nationalist) platforms provides a point of entry for traversing Soviet star culture in the Thaw era and the involvement of Vladimir Putin in shaping the influence of celebrities in contemporary Russia.

Douglas Kellner writes that, “in the contemporary era of media spectacle, it helps politicians to be global celebrities to effectively promote national interests or deal with global issues” (122). In continuing to examine the inner workings of fame and the state’s pivotal role in the curation of stars in Soviet society, this chapter looks ahead towards the role of the Soviet celebrity-building process with respect to present-day politics in the Russian Federation. In questioning how the celebrification of Soviet culture is substantiated in today’s Russia, I explore the posthumous celebrity status of the Soviet hockey star, Valerii Kharlamov. I maintain that the answer to this inquiry lies in the multifaceted relationship between the Soviet state and sport, the current political administration’s resurrection of Kharlamov’s star text, and its desire to re-plot it according to contemporary political and national interests as they relate to celebrity culture.

Much like the Space Race, sport in the Soviet Union became part of the movement for demonstrating progress and cultural superiority to the West. Physical culture constituted a huge component of Soviet everyday life, through the practice of sport for leisure, spectator sports, and eventually sport at the level of Olympic competition. Prior to its involvement in the Games, the Soviet Union participated in a separate tournament, The Red Sport International (Sportintern), an

organization that existed for sixteen years but which presided over “proletarian sports culture,” an alternative to the Olympics.<sup>77</sup> Once the USSR began to participate at the Olympics, figures who best fulfilled the Soviet sport enterprise and who were most coveted by capitalist ambitions—like Kharlamov—were coopted as part of state-sponsored campaigns to demonstrate the accomplishments and capabilities of Soviet athletics. Sport was especially essential to the celebrity apparatus because the best athletes had the ability to cross geo-political boundaries and participate on the international stage at the Olympic Games. Olympic athletes were some of the brightest Soviet stars precisely because they could be showcased for audiences across the world, serving as examples, at the most basic level, of physical fitness and health for Soviet citizens and, from a broader perspective, as triumphant symbols of the socialist way of life.

Whereas the popularity of dead stars is often determined by a participatory fandom that regards the figure as “a living cultural presence,” Kharlamov’s celebrity afterlife is almost

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<sup>77</sup>“By sponsoring parades, demonstrations and meetings, as well as athletic competitions between Soviet athletes and European workers, the Sportintern tried to advance revolutionary goals through political education directed at members of communist (and socialist) sports clubs . . . the Sportintern claimed member sections in Europe, Latin America and North America, but its total membership never exceeded several hundred thousand workers outside the Soviet Union—a small fraction of the working class interested in sport. Even at its peak it remained a marginal organization, poorly funded, poorly organized and often ignored by the Comintern. In its main task—bringing the socialist workers’ sports movement under communist control—it was spectacularly unsuccessful” (Keys, “Soviet Sport” 417-18).

exclusively contingent on the state's endorsement, funding, and promotion of his star text, rather than hockey enthusiasts or mourning admirers.<sup>78</sup> Kharlamov, even to Westerners, was the most admired figure of Soviet sport culture, its political stakes, and its Olympic objectives, but his fame has experienced a vigorous resurgence in recent years in part because Russia won the bid to host the 2014 Winter Olympics in the prized Black Sea resort town of Sochi; his image has forthrightly been the face of a series of agitprop cultural events circuitously linked to the Russian-hosted Games. He, first, was the subject of Lebedev's film, *Legend No. 17 (Legenda No. 17)*, a biopic about the hockey star that realized overwhelming popularity in Russia and was screened recurrently on Russian television. Kharlamov, second, was publicly acknowledged as a national hero by President Putin, who celebrated the former athlete's birthday and endorsed the film with great enthusiasm. Putin, third, carried out a televised performance at a hockey gala on his own birthday in 2015, during which he appeared to be performing the hockey star's celebrity identity. Despite the fact that these events occurred both before and after the Olympics, the megaproject of the Sochi Games lent the state an opportunity to initiate and continue to spark a reawakening of Kharlamov's popularity for the purposes of promoting Russian pride in popular culture. His posthumous celebrity image accordingly suggests the persisting significance of Soviet celebrities to contemporary Russian politics and national interests.

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<sup>78</sup>Note Kharlamov's posthumous celebrity image vis-à-vis that of, for example, Elvis Presley.

As Chris Rojek writes, "The pilgrims who flock to Graceland, the burial place and former home of Elvis Presley, do not so much honour a dead God as proclaim the presence of a living secular one in popular culture" (175).

With respect to the posthumous fandom of the Hong Kong actor Leslie Cheung, Yiman Wang has written that, “Cheung’s posthumous charisma interestingly demonstrates how an age of instability calls into being an iconic figure; and how, conversely, the death of a celebrity reconfirms the need to build a collective identity” (328). This chapter argues that Kharlamov’s posthumous stardom should likewise be understood as emerging from Putin’s own celebrity status and his continued efforts to consolidate Kremlin politics with mass culture, which in turn mirror Soviet rituals of paying tribute to heads of state in the former USSR. Kharlamov represented a hero for the Soviet generation and is a role model for Russian youth; he is simultaneously an example of the Russo-Soviet platform of participating in sport on a global scale. By folding the celebrity athlete into Russian politics, the state also attempts to dissolve the boundaries between the Soviet and the contemporary, all the while creating a space of pride and prestige for itself in international sport culture.

#### **4.1 SPORT, SOVIET HOCKEY, AND VALERII KHARLAMOV**

Even before the revolution, Lenin recognized the significance of physical culture and sport for the ideals of the future Soviet state. Just as with other pursuits in the cultural sphere, in the late Tsarist era sport was a privilege for the wealthy. As Mike O’Mahony writes,

Whilst several sports clubs and societies had emerged in the late Tsarist period, hierarchical social restrictions, prohibitive membership fees and a strict amateur code all ensured that most sporting activities were confined to the wealthy, leisured classes. The future leader of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Ilych Lenin, however, held notably strong views on the social significance of sport and physical exercise and advocated its broader promotion.  
(15)

Lenin's educational philosophy, inspired by Marx, combined training of both the body and mind. Marx recommended that workers and citizens of the future be given the chance for balanced education as well as the need for leisure and recreation: "Physically-fit and mentally-alert workers are better able to cope with new industrial skills and increasingly complex technology and to have higher productivity by showing less absenteeism and greater activity on the job" (qtd. Riordan, "Marx, Lenin" 154). His educational philosophy contained three components: "First, mental education. Second, bodily education, such as is given in schools of gymnastics, and by military exercises. Third, technical training, which acquaints the pupil with the basic principles of all processes of production and, simultaneously, gives him the habit of handling elementary instruments of all trades" (Riordan, "Marx, Lenin" 156). Marx's approach upheld the notion that the more opportunities workers had to participate in such activities, the more productive they would become, both intellectually and on the job.

Lenin's philosophy also promoted training of the mind and body:

Эта правильная мысль заключается в том, что нельзя себе представить идеала будущего общества без соединения обучения с производительным трудом молодого поколения: ни обучение и образование без производительного труда, ни производительный труд без параллельного обучения и образования не могли бы быть поставлены на ту высоту, которая требуется современным уровнем техники и состоянием научного знания. (Lenin 485)<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>"It is impossible to visualise the ideal of a future society without a combination of instruction and productive labour, nor can productive labour without parallel instruction and physical education be put on a plane required by the modern level of technology and the state of scientific knowledge" (qtd. Riordan, "Marx, Lenin" 157).

Lenin, moreover, actively practiced physical fitness himself. Those who encouraged sporting activities and recreation often recalled his routine as a model for active life even into the later years of the USSR.<sup>80</sup>

The aims of regularly engaging in physical culture and sport were meant to permeate the lives of all Soviet citizens and this objective also prevailed, to varying degrees, until the collapse of the Soviet state. Sports clubs, programs, and associations could be found at all levels of civil society, from the local to the international.

Throughout its existence the Soviet state regularly sponsored programmes promoting and supporting a whole gamut of sporting activities: competitions were organized at the local, regional, national and international levels, whilst theatrical manifestations of sport, including mass sports parades and gymnastics displays, were widely practised and became a regular feature of official festivities on public holidays. From childhood to adulthood, Soviet citizens were constantly encouraged to partake of physical exercise. In schools, sport and physical education constituted a significant part of the curriculum, whilst at work factory employees were encouraged, sometimes even compelled, to take part in physical exercise programmes on the shop floor. During leisure time, sports clubs attached to unions, workplaces and residential centres also provided a whole host of facilities and activities for their members ranging from gymnastic training for toddlers to individual coaching for the nation's best performing athletes. Sport also played a major role within the popular media. Radio broadcasters and popular journals provided regular guidance on physical exercise programmes for listeners and readers alike. (O'Mahony 7-8)

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<sup>80</sup>James Riordan, writing in 1976 notes that, "Lenin's sporting activity may seem to have little relevance to an understanding of sport in the Soviet Union. One must bear in mind, however, the Soviet establishment's cult of Lenin and penchant for looking to Lenin's personal example when seeking to justify current policies. Official advocacy for daily exercises and such pursuits as chess can thus call on Lenin's own preferences. The desire to promote certain forms of recreation has certainly resulted in the highlighting of individual aspects of Lenin's habits and mode of life" ("Marx, Lenin" 157).

While the promotion of physical activity thrived as a measure of good health for average Soviet citizens, more accomplished athletes were meant to serve as the embodiment of Soviet values and that expectation was further broadened for Olympians. As Robert Edelman points out,

For the government, the aim of high-performance (or elite) sports was to inspire citizens to exercise and therefore become better workers and soldiers. Elite athletes were to be heroic role-models for their fellow citizens, who would learn lessons of discipline, orderliness, honesty, fitness, patriotism, and respect for authority. In this sense, spectator sports' organizers sought to gain public consent for the dominance of the state by advertising its norms and goals. Olympic victories and international successes were supposed to enhance the power of the dominant authorities in the USSR. (ix)

State policy and influence affected all echelons of Soviet sport. During its early years the state denounced Western styles of sporting competition "as inherently capitalist and exploitative," and instead

attempted to build an alternative international system based on a distinctly "proletarian" brand of sport and physical culture that eschewed individualism and record-seeking. Like other efforts to develop nationalist mass sport, however, the Soviet attempt to develop a domestic and international system of physical culture that was class-based, collectivist and mass-oriented was ultimately overtaken by the expanding powers of the capitalist, consumer-oriented and elite-centered transnational sport culture. (Keys, "Soviet Sport" 414)

State motivation for encouraging physical culture ultimately became more oriented towards competitiveness and the state began to integrate and merge its own system into the international sport network.<sup>81</sup> The shift towards "established" Western physical culture and sport

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<sup>81</sup>"The new Soviet culture, all sides agreed, ought to increase labour productivity, prepare workers for defence, and inculcate habits of collectivism, good hygiene and discipline. To achieve these goals, physical educators crated widely-divergent systems combining labour gymnastics, corrective exercises, games, pageants and excursions. Some theorists rejected competitive sport altogether as inherently capitalist and corrupt, whereas others believed that certain sports could be used in moderation to draw the masses into a regimen of hygiene and

traditions was also motivated by the fact that “the regime came to see western international sport as a useful means of reaching large numbers of foreign workers and of impressing foreign governments with Soviet strength . . . Paralleling the introduction of social hierarchies in other areas, as in the creation of a privileged class of high-achieving ‘Stakhanovite’ workers, in 1934 the regime introduced a new category of elite athlete, the ‘distinguished master of sport’” (Keys, “Soviet Sport” 419-20). Stalin, it was recorded, even remarked that, “С буржуазией мы соревнуемся политически, и не без успеха, соревнуемся экономически, соревнуемся всюду, где можно. Почему не соревноваться спортивно?” (Bazhanov 237).<sup>82</sup> Physical culture, as it was viewed through the prism of internationalism, therefore, was a means not only to propagate the official Soviet stance on sport but it was, more importantly, a means to showcase Soviet athletes

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exercise. All agreed, however, that individualism, record-seeking and competitive habits were vices to be discouraged. Internationally as well as domestically, the Soviet Union sought to build an alternative to the capitalist sports system. The Red Sport International (or Sportintern), formed in 1921 as an adjunct to the Comintern, oversaw an international “proletarian sports” culture that posed as an alternative both to the workers’ sports system run by the larger and better-organized Socialist Workers’ Sport International (founded in 1920) and to the still larger and more popular capitalist sports model advanced by the International Olympic Committee and international sports federations” (Keys, “Soviet Sport” 417).

<sup>82</sup>“With the bourgeoisie we compete politically, and not without success, we compete economically, we compete everywhere that we can. Why not compete in sport?” (translation mine)

before the world, to advertise Soviet progress through talent, physical virility, and success. In Keys's words,

participation in elite international sport became a marker of national power. In an era obsessed with quantification and comparison, competition in international sport seemed to offer an equitable basis for quantifiable comparisons of national success in harnessing population resources—a political lure that proved irresistible even to a Stalinist mentality deeply hostile to capitalist forms of internationalism. (“Soviet Sport” 415-6)

The Soviet debut at the Olympic Games occurred in 1952 just before Stalin's death in Helsinki, when Nina Romashkova won the first Soviet gold medal for discus throw. Although this was the first time that the USSR had participated in the Olympics, its citizens had long been practicing sports played at the Games and “much of the outside world was stunned by the Soviet success at Helsinki” (Edelman 122). Other countries, moreover, had at that point become politically oriented towards socialism; Soviet participation, therefore, took on a different meaning in the international community, one in which the state was not isolated in sports practice or in politics. Once Stalin died and until the Soviet Union collapsed, the USSR's Olympic participation and its relationship with the Games in the international community vacillated “between confrontation and détente,” but the Soviet Union proved itself to be stiff competition in several sports, particularly hockey, and the most famous faces of Soviet athletes at the Olympics became known to the West and to spectators around the globe (Edelman 126-7).

For Soviet audiences, Olympic stars belonged to one of the highest orders of public figures and role models. They embodied the platform that was perpetuated by the state—that Soviet society had the leading, most robust athletes (and therefore the fittest population) in the world—and also served as a point of pride for Soviet citizens. Unlike in the West, where sport agents were responsible for supporting the athlete's image and negotiating salaries, in the Soviet case the state offered perks for highly-desired and successful athletes. During the Thaw, the sport celebrity that was propagated for national inspiration was also fashioned for an international audience.

The Soviet sport movement was extraordinarily successful in its Olympic ventures and the importance of its hockey team to state pride cannot be overstated. The group flourished in World Cup competitions, national championships, and world championships, but the team's victories at the Olympics made USSR hockey a force to be respected in the global athletics sphere. The team won its first Olympic gold medal at the 1956 Games in Cortina d' Ampezzo, Italy, earned its second gold in 1964 in Innsbruck, and continued to be victorious until 1980 when they were defeated by the US team in Lake Placid. The team was coached for many years by Anatolii Vladimirovich Tarasov, the "Father of Russian Hockey," who was largely responsible for founding the team. His impact on the prestige of the sport was transformative—and crucial—in the development of Soviet sport tradition after the end of World War II.

Because they did not start from scratch, the Soviets quickly rose to the top levels of world hockey. They did this without a massive influx of resources and without elaborate facilities. Their success was in large measure the result of an ability to attract many of the best representatives of a vast talent pool to the sport of hockey. The growing size of the audience and the great potential rewards made hockey an attractive choice for athletes. At the same time, Soviet hockey had the good fortune to find in Anatolii Tarasov a coach of true genius. Perhaps his greatest gift was an ability to turn disadvantages into advantages. He overcame the Soviets' ignorance of traditional tactics by developing an entirely new style of play. Similarly, he was able to surmount the lack of training facilities by inventing a wide variety of cross-training routines. Finally, he was able to articulate his ideas in written form so that the first generation of Soviet coaches, players, and fans could apply them relatively quickly throughout the entire country. (Edelman 117)

Kharlamov was Tarasov's prodigy and one of the top players for CSKA Moscow (ЦСКА, Tsentral'nyi Sportivnyi Klub Armii) from 1967-1981, until he died tragically in a car accident. Nicknamed "The Red Machine," he was still an unstoppable, active player at the time of his death, at the peak of his career and Soviet hockey. During his time on the team, Kharlamov's accomplishments included eight gold medals in eleven world championships, eleven out of fourteen national championships, his efforts (and sustained injuries) in the 1972 Summit Series between Canada and the Soviet Union, and two gold medals at the Olympic Games.

When Kharlamov led the Soviet team to victory at the Olympics in 1972, in September of that year the National Hockey League (NHL), the largest professional ice hockey organization in North America, had two teams—the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Minnesota North Stars—propose \$1 million offers for Kharlamov who was then only 24 years old. Considering that the league’s top players were only earning \$12,000-15,000 per season, the offer was quite staggering. Only one player, Bobby Hull, had been offered the kind of money that was proposed for Kharlamov and he was nearly ten years older than the Soviet athlete whose only experience playing against NHL players was during the eight-game Summit Series, also in 1972, in which the Soviet national team shocked the Canadians with their competitive edge. “Forced to reassess the quality of Soviet players, NHL executives went from dismissing them to offering unbelievable sums for one: at the same time as Toronto’s owner said he would pay \$1,000,000 for Kharlamov, he professed that he could not ‘afford to pay’ his incumbent star \$150,000” (Soares, “East beats West” 35-6).

Such a proposal speaks not only to the talent of Kharlamov but to his star power in the international sports arena. The mapping of his image from the Soviet Union to Canada canonized his reputation as one of the greatest Soviet athletes of all time, a hero at home and a global celebrity. Once one of the most coveted athletes by teams in the West, Kharlamov never defected. His posthumous stardom, however, has taken on new meanings since the collapse of the Soviet state.

#### **4.2 THE SOCHI OLYMPICS AND KHARLAMOV’S POSTHUMOUS FAME**

Until the 1970s the Olympic Games as a megaproject had substantial state involvement and public funding, while since the early 1980s the private sector has generally dominated investment in the

Games. The 2014 Olympics in Sochi were widely recognized—and criticized—as a directive steered personally and exclusively by Putin. Martin Müller writes that in the case of Sochi, the Games embodied,

a distinct model of *state dirigisme* that accords primacy to the national state . . . This model is reflected both in the narrative framing of the Olympic Games as a stepping stone for national greatness and in the structure of interaction between the national state and big business. In Sochi the national state coordinates the preparation process and directs the investment for the Olympics, reining in the autonomy of the private sector. Despite the formally high share of private investment, principles of entrepreneurialism that emphasise profitability, market-led development and the international mobility of capital take a backseat to directive state action. (2091-2)

Just as hosting an Olympic Games was meant to project particular meaning for the state with respect to placing Russia in a position of international sports prestige, Sochi itself was intended to represent a particular message for tourists, especially within Russia and around Europe. The bid for Sochi occurred in 2007, when “the Games were Putin’s pet idea. Not only did he sponsor the idea domestically by marshalling political and financial support, but he also actively lobbied for Russia and the Olympic Games in the international arena. As part of his efforts, Putin began to hold state receptions in his summer residence in Sochi and to spend his skiing holidays in the nearby mountain village of Krasnaya Polyana.” Quite quickly into his term, Putin announced his goal of “developing the Sochi region into a world-class winter resort to rival established destinations such as Davos in Switzerland . . . The Olympics were hailed as having the potential for becoming a new ‘national idea.’ Even more than that, they were framed as a contribution and recognition of Russia’s reemergence as a great power” (Müller 2095-6). As described in the newspaper *Vedomosti*, “Ведь победа Сочи уже воспринимается и народом, и политической элитой как символ успеха и восстановления былой мощи России . . . Победа Сочи для

Путина—личный успех, считает Баловский. Ведь он лично курировал этот проект” (Petrachkova and Krampets).<sup>83</sup>

Couched in Russian national interests and in those of Russia’s reputation on the international stage, the endeavor of the Sochi Games kindled nostalgia for the victorious years of the Soviet Olympic teams while simultaneously creating a space for a sense of reenergized national pride. If Olympic athletes were the brightest stars of the former Soviet state, then Sochi was the ideal venue to recollect those memories, where successful posthumous stars could take on new significance in accordance with the political interests of Putin and the Russian government.

In examining the reconstruction of Kharlamov’s celebrity text, it is fruitful to return to the polysemic image of the star described by Dyer: “From the perspective of ideology, analyses of stars—as images existing in films and other media texts—stress their structured polysemy, that is, the finite multiplicity of meanings and affects they embody and the attempt so to structure them that some meanings and affects are foregrounded and others are masked or displaced” (*Stars* 3). In extending Dyer’s model to Kharlamov’s present-day celebrity, his star text suggests three components of political culture in today’s Russia: national pride, the Soviet ritual of paying tribute to leaders, and the merging of his celebrity image with Putin as head of state.

Produced by Nikita Mikhalkov’s film company, TriTe—Mikhalkov himself being an ardent Putin supporter—TV Channel Rossiia 1, and the Federal Film Fund, *Legend* features a star-

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<sup>83</sup>“The victory of Sochi is already understood by the people and the political elite as a symbol of success and recovery of the former Russian power . . . Sochi's victory for Putin is a personal success . . . He, after all, personally supervised the project” (translation mine).

studded cast of the most popular actors in the contemporary Russian Federation. Danila Kozlovskii, who stars as Kharlamov, is a heartthrob for young Russian audiences as well as an actor who also works in the United States.<sup>84</sup> Kozlovskii, who trained for months on the ice with staff trainers at his disposal in order to play the “dream role” of Kharlamov, has been subtly critical of the merging of the celebrity with the political in Russia (Grachev).<sup>85</sup> As a biopic, several

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<sup>84</sup>Kharlamov starred in Mark Waters’s *Vampire Academy* (2014).

<sup>85</sup>АиФ: - Даниил, у вас нет ощущения, что в советское время спортсмены становились по-настоящему национальными героями, которых помнят до сих пор, а сейчас звёзды спорта ассоциируются скорее с шоу-бизнесом, с контрактами, гонорарами, скандалами?

Д.К.: - Это правда, сегодня спортсмены уже не становятся национальными героями, во всяком случае, в прежних советских масштабах. Время изменилось, и спорт тоже. Сейчас большой спорт - это большой бизнес, там свои жёсткие законы, свои цели. К подлинным спортивным законам и целям это имеет всё меньшее отношение, и потому для меня, например, теряет интерес. Раньше, к примеру, я мог назвать себя футбольным болельщиком, пусть не ярым, а теперь - нет, скучно. А когда спортсмены идут в большую политику, на полном серьёзе считая, что их знаний и кругозора достаточно, чтобы принимать важные государственные решения, - это смешно и грустно.

“AIF: - Daniill, do you not have the feeling that in Soviet times, athletes became true national heroes, who are still remembered, but now sports stars are associated with show business, contracts, fees, scandals?”

DK.: - It is true, athletes today do not become national heroes, at least not to the extent that they did in the Soviet times. Times have changed, and sports too. Now professional sport is a big

scholars and film critics took issue with *Legend*'s overt nationalist overtones. Elena Stishova noted that,

Обратная сторона успеха «Легенды № 17» уже проявилась — президент Путин лично заказал байопик о Льве Яшине, тоже легендарном спортсмене. Возможно, будем иметь поток картин об асах советского спорта. Не дай бог растиражировать соблазн простоты, отсекающий «психоложества» в обрисовке персонажей и в интерпретации реальности, сработавшей на успех «Легенды...» . . . Так что же в итоге? Наше будущее — это наше проклятое прошлое?<sup>86</sup>

Others have criticized the film for its eagerness to invent biographical details about Kharlamov's life, creating a “fictional” Soviet space unrecognizable to the contemporary generation. Sergey Dobrynin's review of the film, for example, asserts that, “everything here is false.”<sup>87</sup>

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business, with its own rigid laws, its own goals. It is moving farther and farther away from the true laws and values of sports and I, for one, am losing interest in it. Previously, for example, I could call myself a football fan, if not an avid one, and now – no, it's boring. When athletes are in politics seriously considering their knowledge enough to make important state decisions—it's funny and sad” (translation mine).

<sup>86</sup>“The downside of the success of *Legend No. 17* has already appeared—President Putin personally ordered a biopic about Lev Yashin, also a legendary athlete. Perhaps we will have a string of pictures about the aces of Soviet sport. The temptation of simplicity eliminates false psychologism in the depiction of the characters and the interpretation of reality, triggered by the success of *Legend* . . . So what is the result? That our future is our cursed past” (translation mine).

<sup>87</sup>“a deal is struck between Soviet sports authorities and the NHL on having a ‘super series’ between Canada and the USSR. (In fact, no one called it a ‘super series’ in 1972—not in

As Dennis Bingham writes, however, the biopic

narrates, exhibits, and celebrates the life of a subject in order to demonstrate, investigate, or question his or her importance in the world; to illuminate the fine points of a personality; and for both artist and spectator to discover what it would be like to be this person, or to be a certain type of person . . . The appeal of the biopic lies in seeing an actual person who did something interesting in life, known mostly in public, transformed into a character. Private behaviors and actions and public events as they might have been in the person's time are formed together and interpreted dramatically . . . The genre's charge, which dates back to its salad days in the Hollywood studio era, is to enter the biographical subject into the pantheon of cultural mythology, one way or another, and to show why he or she belongs there. (10)<sup>88</sup>

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Russia—but the linguistic anachronisms abound in this film; modern-day slang is especially jarring). Before that event, however, the Soviet team plays at the 1972 Winter Olympics in Sapporo, triumphantly, and upon return, is forced to participate in a rigged game with Spartak. The players are supposed to lose because, they are told, Leonid Brezhnev, who attends the game, is a Spartak fan. Tarasov refuses to cooperate and is fired. An enraged Kharlamov chases Balashov in his car only to get in a terrible crash . . . There never was such a game. Brezhnev was a fan of CSKA (Kharlamov's team), not Spartak. Tarasov quit the national team leadership in 1972 and would be fired from CSKA in 1975, for different reasons. Kharlamov would get in his first (non-fatal) car crash in 1976, and it will not be politically or emotionally related.”

<sup>88</sup>Custen's analysis of the biopic in the Hollywood context argues that, “Given all the possible variables—star casting and available personnel, censorship, the power of some producer's point of view, legal considerations—that can influence the shape of a life on film, how do these films situate themselves as historical narratives? . . . The title . . . serves the function of avowing that the film that follows is true. This convention of the biopic, the introductory assertion of the truth, serves as a reminder of a fact so obvious that we might overlook it: that most films made in Hollywood are not supposed to be taken as true. This use of the title sets up one of the genre's

Bingham's analysis of the biopic suggests the importance of the genre to the building of a celebrity mythology and its potential for crafting and calcifying national and political platforms. The notion that the biopic offers a frame of reference for celebrity influence, with a strong emphasis on his or her personality, invites a closer look at the rhetoric that Putin uses in his public endorsements of Kharlamov and Lebedev's film.

On the eve of the Youth World Hockey championships in 2013, Putin himself appeared in a televised presentation of Lebedev's film to the Russian team. Prior to the screening he greeted the young players with a brief introduction.

У нашей молодежной сборной завтра начало чемпионата мира по хоккею, и мы посчитали, что вот именно в этот день было бы правильным презентовать новый фильм, который сделали о нашем выдающемся хоккеисте наши кинематографисты. Но не все, наверное, знают, что самое главное, что сделало его таковым – это его характер, потому что еще в детстве врачи поставили ему довольно тяжелый диагноз – порок сердца. И он не только с этим справился, но стал выдающимся игроком не только нашей сборной, но и мирового хоккея. (*RIA Novosti*)<sup>89</sup>

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distinctive qualities, a claim to truth. The title also sets up the moment of a life when we can witness the birth of a particular talent—seldom the character's literal birth . . . It seemingly permits the viewer to be present at the creation, witnessing the birth or the first display of the traits that will make the older version of the biographee famous" (Custen 51).

<sup>89</sup>“Tomorrow our national youth team begins the world hockey championships, and we felt that on this day it would be appropriate to present the new film made about our outstanding hockey player by our filmmakers. But probably not everyone knows the most important thing that has made him the way he is his character, because as a child the doctors gave him quite a tough diagnosis—heart disease. And not only did he deal with it, but he became an outstanding player not only on our team, but in global hockey” (translation mine).

In this speech the president underscores three components of Kharlamov's star image as he wishes to craft it in contemporary Russia. He, first, refers to Kharlamov as "ours," dissolving the divide between the current youth who were not alive during the time that Kharlamov played and former generations of Soviet athletes. Putin, second, highlights that what made the star outstanding is not his talent, the number of goals he scored, or the games that he won but, rather, his character. Kharlamov, as the president asserts, persevered despite the health challenges he faced at a young age.<sup>90</sup> Putin, third, emphasizes Kharlamov's impact on *global* hockey, drawing attention to his status as celebrity on the international stage, his achievements at the Olympic Games and other world competitions, and thus the contemporaneous importance of his contributions to the Russo-Soviet sport tradition. Kharlamov, as Putin makes clear, should be the inspiration for young hockey players and, by extension, all young Russian athletes and citizens. One particular moment in the film is worth a closer look as it relates to national pride in contemporary Russia and Putin's fixation on Kharlamov as a role model for youth. The film opens in Spain in 1956, a nod to the fact that Kharlamov's mother was Basque and the hockey star spent part of his childhood with her in Bilbao. Just as the local running of the bulls tradition is about to begin, the young Kharlamov, who is safely standing on an apartment balcony high above the streets with his parents, sees a puppy stranded below, directly in the path of the bulls. "Valera" races to the street to scoop up the puppy just in time to save him from the animals' rampage (Figure 14). He is furiously scolded by his mother and, nevertheless, the scene sets up two interesting ideas for

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<sup>90</sup>As Dobrynin notes (and criticizes), this message is recurrently emphasized in the film.

Kharlamov "is told . . . that he can achieve anything, as long as he really wants it—the maxim that will later be repeated by his girlfriend and by his coach."

the way in which the viewer is meant to interpret the film. The moment suggests, first, that Kharlamov's moral compass was formed from a very early age, setting up a framework to underscore the positive aspects of his personality.



**Figure 14: Screenshot from Nikolai Lebedev's *Legenda No. 17* (2013), taken by author; Kharlamov saves a puppy in danger**

In this way, nationalist sentiment is fused with Kharlamov's "goodness," linking Russian pride with the development of admirable character. The scene, second, reminds the viewer of Putin's own celebrity image in the international media, one in which he is frequently photographed with young animals. It is well-known that Putin is an animal lover and this subtle yet unmistakable reference to his benevolent side initiates a viewing of the film that connects national pride with Putin himself. It also, however, draws an association between the Soviet star, Putin as a celebrity, and Russian state interests.

Putin's own celebrity status is well-glorified in the Russian and international media and his popularity has assumed several archetypes of stardom: the hunk, the product, the strongman, and the ideologue. During his first term as president, moreover, he established a presence for himself domestically in which his celebrity image embodied all of these components, creating a community that stood behind him as the symbol of the political party, United Russia.<sup>91</sup> In previous chapters, I have argued that the Soviet state and various artists, primarily filmmakers, recognized the importance of the celebrity figure in society for the promotion of socialist principles like progress and achievement. In the conception of "the economy of the gift" (referred to in Chapter I of this dissertation), he argues that Stalin could determine who was worthy of awards and special privileges in Soviet society. In exchange for these benefits, the celebrity became indebted to the leader and to the state. The state's role in this exchange occurred primarily through state-controlled media, which propagandized and rationalized such transactions and behaviors. Cultural figures who publicly thanked Stalin reinforced their personal ties to the leader and therefore their celebrity status in Soviet society. In this model, the leader controlled the great accomplishments of Soviet culture vis-à-vis the celebrity.

The contemporary model suggests Putin's efforts in reimagining the Soviet ritual of publicly thanking leaders. I understand "ritual," in this context, to mean a sincere ceremony, actions or behaviors consistently followed by a person or a group of people. In her analysis of legitimacy and power through socialist ritual, Christel Lane writes that in Soviet times the

rites of initiation, such as into the Pioneers, the Komsomol, the working class, the army, into citizenship (the passport ritual) and also into labour collectives, all tend to be replete with representative ritual, i.e. ritual which is a dramatic reconstruction and celebration of the past. This past is not always and rarely only the revolutionary past but also the period of the Great Patriotic War and a less clearly defined labour tradition. Thus there are on

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<sup>91</sup>See Goscilo, "The ultimate celebrity" 35.

most occasions three heroes present, representing the past: an old Bolshevik (preferably one who had some personal contact with Lenin), a War hero and a hero of labour. They resurrect the past in recounting their memories. (213)

If ritualizing the past in Soviet times meant heroicizing Lenin and other leading socialist figures, then as the head of state Putin celebrates the past by offering gratitude to the posthumous Kharlamov in order to reinforce the accomplishments of the state government. Kharlamov is the face of this ritual: Soviet sport reflects the “greatness” of Russo-Soviet society and Putin’s public acknowledgement of his stardom reinforces and legitimates his own political influence.

One might look to the celebration of the birth of Stalin, not as an equivalent cultural event, but as a model for the way that Putin pays tribute Kharlamov as a leading role model. The president gave a public speech on behalf of the birth of Kharlamov in 2013, the year of the release of Lebedev’s film and the winter prior to the Olympics in Sochi.<sup>92</sup>

One of the brightest and most talented players in hockey history, Valery Kharlamov was an idol to millions of his fans. The speed and unique style of this outstanding forward, his great force of will and team spirit were crucial to many of CSKA’s convincing victories, the triumphs of our national team at the Olympic Games and world championships, the Summit Series between the USSR and Canada, and other major tournaments. Today Valery Kharlamov’s name, his successes and achievements, are the pride of our sporting world and entire country. I am sure that CSKA hockey club, Russia’s ice knights, will continue to honour Valery Kharlamov’s rich heritage and develop the tradition he founded. And younger players will look up to this legendary player and wonderful person. (Kremlin.ru)

Putin’s rhetoric, here again, underscores components of national pride, Kharlamov’s potential to serve as a role model for Russian youth, and his impact and reputation for the global community. Putin’s sustained public praise of Kharlamov draws attention to the ritualistic nature of his use of the celebrity to consolidate Kremlin interests with mass culture. As Lane maintains,

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<sup>92</sup>See Ssorin-Chaikov, 359.

Besides strengthening the legitimacy of the . . . system and political elites by emphasizing the traditional nature of their authority, the . . . system of ritual also serves to stabilize power relations in other ways. It functions to disguise conflicts of interests between elites and various social groups and keeps them latent. Ritual accomplishes this by transmitting definitions of social relations made by political elites which structure the perception of social reality by those who take part in ritual performances. (Lane 215)

In drawing these connections, Putin's speeches dissolve the divisions between the elite and the public, the Soviet and the post-Soviet.

Putin also accomplished this aim on his sixty-third birthday, 7 October 2015, when he celebrated on the ice at a gala hockey game in Sochi which was well-attended by state officials, legendary sports stars, and former NHL hockey players. Broadcast on state-run television, Putin, announced as "President of the Russian Federation," skated out on the ice fist bumping other members of the team while sporting the number "11" on his jersey (<http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=2672753#>). His speech after the match was showcased as the central event of the evening, all while he entertained a roar from other players pounding their hockey sticks against the ice in support.

Благодаря нашим звездам хоккейным советского и российского времени, этот проект стал успешным. Спасибо вам другие друзья за ваш вклад в развитие Ночной хоккейной лиги. И конечно я приветствую и поздравляю с этим событием любителей, таких как я, например. Людей, которые не занимались так профессионально спортом, как нашими выдающиеся игроки. Что хочу сказать, я благодарен вам не только за ваше участие личное, но и за то, что вы своим примером побуждаете миллионы наших граждан заниматься физической культурой и спортом. Тот, кто двигается и идет к победе, обязательно ее добьется. Успехов всем. (Zarubin)<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>“Thanks to our hockey stars of the Soviet and Russian times, this project became a success.

Thank you dear friends for your contribution to the development of the Evening Hockey League.

And of course, I welcome and congratulate the fans, like me, for example. People who do not engage in such a professional sport like our outstanding players. What I want to say, is that I thank you not only for your private participation, but also for the fact that you, by example,

In this speech, Putin directly links Soviet and Russian hockey stars, thanking them, and crediting them with the success of the event and with the victorious tradition of Russo-Soviet hockey. Here, however, Putin shifts from participating in the ritual of paying gratitude to the star figure and instead, *becomes* the celebrity. In performing the character of a hockey star, he uses his own celebrity status to humble his image against that of Kharlamov's. He draws a connection between the Soviet tradition of sport and physical culture and contemporary Russia, reinforcing the message disseminated in *Legend*: those who chase victory will succeed in all that they do. The action of publicly thanking—and subsequently becoming—a sports celebrity legitimates Putin's own star power in the cultural sphere, and therefore his current political interests in creating a space in which points of Soviet pride become notions of Russian grandeur.

### 4.3 CONCLUSION

In “The Celebrity Politician,” John Street poses the question, “In a world in which pop stars are increasingly portrayed as, or behave like, politicians does it make equal sense to think of politicians as pop . . . stars” (85)? Street's inquiry hones in on the inseparability between popular culture and politics in contemporary culture, the intersection not only between political figures and stars themselves, but between mass culture and national interests. In today's Russia, it is clear that Kharlamov's star value lies in his cultural power in politics. The president recognizes the

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motivate millions of our citizens to engage in physical culture and sports. Anyone who moves towards victory will be sure to achieve it. Good luck to all” (translation mine).

importance of the celebrity—specifically the Soviet celebrity—and his influence in serving as a model for morals, values, and the future of Russian national pride according to Putin’s directives. By reimagining Kharlamov’s persona, he attempts to erase the boundary between Soviet and contemporary Russian culture and emphasizes the continued importance of Russo-Soviet sport on an international scale. As Keys has written regarding the Soviet sport tradition, “nationalist impulses helped to fuel the internationalization of culture” (“Soviet Sport” 415). By consolidating the boundaries between the political face of the Kremlin and the celebrity athlete, Russian culture—and the state that currently represents it—is able also to fuse the Soviet and the contemporary, while creating a space for itself as a leading victor in the Olympic Games on the international stage.

Kharlamov, as this chapter has demonstrated, belongs to three cultures, none of which is mutually exclusive: the Soviet, the Russian, and the international. Through the promotion of Kharlamov’s image by Putin, in cultural events surrounding the Games in Sochi, Kharlamov’s star text is cultivated for a contemporary Russian audience and simultaneously promoted for the international community. In combining these cultural spheres, it once again becomes evident that in the Russo-Soviet system, the main architect of the celebrity is the state. Putin’s endorsement and performance of the new Kharlamov suggests the broader relevance of thinking about the connections between popular Soviet figures, particularly Thaw-era celebrities, to contemporary culture and politics. The promotion of Kharlamov by the Russian president suggests that the Soviet celebrity holds value for the face of Russia in the Olympic and international community, for its own sense of pride and for the ways in which it wishes to be recognized around the globe.

## CONCLUSION

In 1998, the now billionaire Arkadii Novikov, known as Moscow's first restaurateur, opened Captive of the Caucasus on Prospekt Mira, 43 in Moscow.<sup>94</sup> Conceptualized as a themed restaurant, Novikov envisioned that his business would capture the ambiance of the Thaw film favorite after which it was named. Located in the center of the city in one of its wealthiest neighborhoods, the establishment has first courses that run up to almost \$40 US dollars. This combination of high-end dining, along with wistfulness for 1960s Soviet cinema, is curiously captured in its appeal to contemporary consumers on the restaurant's website:

Ресторан «Кавказская пленница» – одно из самых удачных тематических заведений столицы – работает с 1998 года и с самого своего открытия привлекает гостеприимной и радостной атмосферой, а также отменной кухней. Ресторан создан по мотивам любимой миллионами советской комедии «Кавказская пленница, или Новые приключения Шурика». Будет вам здесь и «комсомолка, спортсменка и просто красавица», и «советский суд – самый гуманный суд в мире», и даже холодильник «Розенлеф». Впрочем, будет также отменный сервис, так как на этот вид услуг ностальгические мотивы не распространяются . . . В ресторан «Кавказская пленница» надо ходить хотя бы для того, чтобы иметь возможность повторить культовое: «Жить – хорошо. А хорошо жить – еще лучше!» (“Kontseptsiaa”)<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Novikov has since opened several more restaurants, all of which are part of his larger company, The Novikov Group.

<sup>95</sup>“The Prisoner of the Caucasus restaurant—one of the most successful thematic establishments in the capital—has been operating since 1998, and since its opening provides a welcoming and joyful atmosphere and also superb cuisine. The restaurant was created based on the comedy loved by millions, *The Captive of the Caucasus*. Here you will find the “komsomolka, sportswoman, and simply a beauty,” “the soviet court, the most humane in the world,” and even

Referencing Graeme Turner's notion that the celebrity's value lies in the generation of profit, it is once again worthwhile to recall Aleksandr Dem'ianenko's career, this time as another example of the ongoing significance of Thaw celebrity culture in the post-Soviet era. Turner writes that,

Celebrities are developed to make money . . . Their names and images are used to market films, CDs, magazines, newspapers, television programmes—even the evening news . . . entrepreneurs want celebrities involved with their projects because they believe this will help them attract audiences. Film producers use stars as a means of attracting investment to their projects, marketers use celebrity endorsements as a means of profiling and branding their products, television programmes feature guest appearances from celebrities to build their audiences and sports promoters use celebrity athletes to attract media attention and increase the size of the gate. (193)

Novikov's restaurant is only one example of the ways in which celebrity formats from the Thaw period have enjoyed posthumous success in the post-Soviet era through a nostalgic celebration and commodification of popular culture icons.<sup>96</sup> His successful business venture, ironically, is based on a film in which one of the most beloved—and later one of the most destitute—Soviet actors starred.

Sean Redmond and Su Holmes's edited work, *Stardom and Celebrity: A Reader*, has been of principal influence in the execution of this dissertation, as the contributors to their volume

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the "Rozenlef" refrigerator. However there will also be excellent service, as our vision of service does not extend nostalgia only to motifs . . . One must at least go to the restaurant, "Prisoner of the Caucasus" in order to repeat the cult phrase: "To live is good. To live well is even better" (translation mine)!

<sup>96</sup>Dem'ianenko's career is especially celebrated through commodified nostalgia. As recently as 2014, a special craft beer was released with the Shurik image on its label.

position their arguments predominantly within the Western celebrity paradigm, often posturing Hollywood stardom as the principal force behind celebrity studies and concentrating on the importance of capitalist structures in the fabric of the celebrity image. Their analyses have relentlessly challenged the framework and composition of my research, most often prompting a return to the question of what consequence fame and celebrities has had on narratives of Soviet culture. Redmond and Holmes write that,

Fame matters on one level because of our status as audiences for celebrity (we have all been, or are, a fan of someone). Stars and celebrities are consumed and appropriated by fans in ways which have a profound effect on their identity, self-image and sense of belonging . . . to be in the media frame is to be at the “centre” of things, an idea so heavily naturalized that it often, paradoxically, seems difficult to *see* [through] . . . this is exactly why star and celebrity matters: we should want to make a critical and questioning sense of this impossible vision of fame, a vision that not everyone has equal access to, or ownership of. (4-5; emphasis in original)

The introduction to this dissertation noted the absence of discussions around celebrity in Soviet cultural history, but my work has also examined fame from unconventional angles, at least in the point of view of the celebrity and media studies field: the role of the cultural authorities, the effect of state-run news media on the celebrity image, the relationship between audiences in a socialist state to those in the international community. To once again recall Dyer’s assertion that stars matter because:

The complex way in which we produce and reproduce the world in technologically developed societies involves the ways in which we separate ourselves into public and private persons, producing and consuming persons and so on, and the ways in which we as people negotiate and cope with those divisions. Stars are about all of that, and are one of the most significant ways we have for making sense of it all. That is why they matter to us, and why they are worth thinking about. (*Heavenly Bodies 2*)

This project insists that the significance of celebrities and fame cannot be restricted to this classification. Celebrities impacted all cultural spheres and encompassed all social and professional echelons in the Soviet Union: officials, workers, industries, citizens, youth, and, most of all, celebrities themselves. The building blocks of the socialist celebrity system differ in many

ways from the components of first-world fame, but second-world celebrities also influenced the ways that visual texts were created, interpreted, and presented to the public. They affected how audiences viewed Soviet culture at home in the USSR and on the international stage. They reveal and continue to serve as a reminder (in contemporary Russia) of the role of cultural authorities and the state in negotiations of the celebrity apparatus. Celebrities, more than anything else, established the ways that the Soviet public related to its own social, cultural, and political systems.

Working from the central question of why fame mattered in Thaw-era culture, this dissertation has tried to demonstrate the overlapping similarities and stark differences that Soviet stars have with their Western counterparts, all the while maintaining that celebrities in the USSR were not simply adapted from Hollywood schemas. I have shown that one useful way of discussing the “celebrification” of Soviet culture lies in the relationship—directly and indirectly—between celebrities and visual texts in the USSR, quite often via the touchstone of the Soviet cinema industry. The complex connections between cinema, the state, Soviet citizens, and international audiences—which I have emphasized—becomes apparent in each of the dissertation’s four chapters, along with the legacy of film beyond the scope of the Thaw and early Stagnation.

I have intended to stress, furthermore, that throughout Soviet cultural history—and beyond—the second-world celebrity is also not a closed or static concept. It is, rather, a phenomenon that is capable of travel, often through artistic media, beyond the geographic boundaries of the USSR, as well as a figure that remains exclusively within established state borders. The socialist film star may never experience the world outside of the Soviet system and simultaneously may be known to cinema-goers around the globe. Soviet celebrities may, in fact,

remain stars of their own eras or come back to life under different cultural structures, in younger generations, and under new—or recurring—political states.

The Thaw-era celebrity, moreover, matters because of its legacies in the contemporary Russian cultural climate. Albeit a provocative claim, I would suggest that the Thaw-era celebrity, more than in any other period of Russian or Soviet cultural history, has laid a large part of the foundation for the way that the celebrity apparatus functions in Russia today. The Thaw star, in some cases, has necessitated a kind of hybrid post-Soviet celebrity figure: one who is composed of capitalist leniencies, whether those are new or related to posthumous stardoms, and one whose image is married to the state and can be traced to the relationship between cultural authorities and celebrity figures from the Soviet period. I have attempted to demonstrate such examples in this dissertation while bearing in mind that the Soviet celebrity was, in and of itself, a historical and cultural phenomenon that must be appreciated in the context of its own social and political milieu.

The aims of this project are to illuminate the makeup of the celebrity in the socialist context through figures of the Thaw and early Stagnation period, the critical time in the history of Soviet life that followed Stalin's reign and preceded the beginnings of Perestroika, its reforms, and ultimately the demise of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, it is possible to see the origins of the contemporary capitalist star through the figure of the Thaw, in part through the cult of personality of Vladimir Putin. My project, on the other hand, contributes to the notion that celebrity must be appreciated as manifesting in various formats of global sensations.

Following Dyer, Ellis stresses the nature of the star as dichotomous and paradoxical, maintaining that,

Star images are paradoxical. They are composed of elements which do not cohere, of contradictory tendencies. They are composed of clues rather than complete meanings, of representations that are less complete, less stunning, than those offered by cinema. The star image is an *incoherent* image. It shows the star both as an ordinary person and as an extraordinary person. It is also an *incomplete* image. It offers only the face, only the voice,

only the still photo, where cinema offers the synthesis of voice, body and motion. The star image is paradoxical and incomplete so that it functions as an invitation to cinema, like the narrative image. It proposes cinema as the completion of its lacks, the synthesis of its separate fragments. (90; emphasis in original)

Ellis's words perhaps provide a window for discussing the fact that the official images of Soviet celebrities were often—not always—complete, coherent, and synthesized. This coherence is composed of common building blocks, three of which are worth recollecting.

First, as opposed to celebrities that are born into first-world economic systems, those in the socialist context are predominantly constructed by the state, which serves as the main architect of the celebrity machine. This dissertation demonstrates the state's role in the building of the celebrity figure in each of its four chapters: through Stalin's role in the celebrification of Chkalov as seen through Kalatozov's film; through the state's role in constructing Samoilova as a film star for the global stage and its simultaneous efforts to prevent her from traveling to Hollywood and forcing her to remain in the USSR; through the efforts to portray Dem'ianenko as the ideal socialist citizen for the purposes of the Soviet film industry; and finally, in Lebedev's biopic of Valerii Kharlamov and the initiatives of the Putin administration to use the film to further its own political platform.

Second, I would suggest that the spirit of internationalism, to varying degrees across each of the four case studies in this work, played a role in the formation of the celebrity figure, insofar that the Soviet celebrities under examination served to underscore the importance of the socialist system within the broader international community. In Chapter One, the dissertation argued that Kalatozov's role in negotiating the Soviet and US cinema industries and his own film's representation of the welcoming of Chkalov in Washington State initiated international importance to the study of Soviet cultural stardom. Chapter Two confirms Samoilova's importance across international media boundaries as the result of her appearance at the Cannes Film Festival.

Although not as immediately evident as in previous chapters, the portrayal of Dem'ianenko in the Soviet press underscored the superiority of the socialist system, its citizens, and the Soviet way of life for its viewers, as opposed to the “corrupt nature” of Western lifestyles. In the final chapter, the showcasing of Kharlamov as an Olympic athlete functions as a way for Putin to continue to communicate the importance of Russia on the international stage and its participation in the Olympic Games.

Third, while media and gossip play a fundamental role in the construction of the celebrity personality in first-world systems, state-controlled media affects the composition of the socialist celebrity in crucial ways. This is clear in Chapter One through the examination of the portrayal of Chkalov and the media sensation surrounding him in Stalinist cinema. Chapter Two demonstrates the role of the media in constructing Samoilova as simultaneously an international and domestic star, highlighting the transnational nature of her celebrity image. Chapter Three discusses the pivotal role of the state-controlled press in the formation of Dem'ianenko's character as re-educator and ideal socialist citizen. Chapter Four recognizes the ways that Putin has used the media to emphasize what he recognizes as the importance of the Olympics to Russian culture and, at the same time, his own political aims.

Given that plenty of celebrities became famous outside of the boundaries of the Soviet Union, it is worth addressing why the dissertation omits some especially famous stars from its case studies, specifically the cosmonaut, Iurii Gagarin. Gagarin's distinction as the first man to enter space and Earth's orbit was unlike any other accomplishment in Soviet history, and his celebrity image certainly sheds light on the way that the new cultural values of the Thaw years were relevant not exclusively to visual formats like cinema, but also in the larger system of developing state heroes. Gagarin represented hope for the future, proof that the Soviet state was—and would

continue to be—a locus for cultural prosperity, technological achievement, and progress. He created the illusion of witnessing Soviet history in real time, and in combination with the embrace of his own “imperfections,” cultivated the image of an honest hero who also fulfilled Soviet campaigns for progress and perseverance. The Soviet state, likewise, eagerly fostered and benefited from the public’s celebration of their new object of admiration.

As Woll points out, “despite the barrage of media attention to the flight of the *Vostok* and to Gagarin himself, this living example of a new positive hero, whose feats were performed in the most public sphere conceivable, apparently failed to inspire film-makers or indeed other artists” (113).<sup>97</sup> There are certainly other approaches to exploring Gagarin’s celebrity image aside from a connection to the Soviet cinema industry, and numerous questions waiting to be investigated with respect to the way that the state cultivated his persona on its own behalf. For the purposes of this dissertation as it stands presently, I have chosen to include for reasons of clarity and coherence those figures whom I perceive to have been shaped, in one way or another, either directly or indirectly, through films themselves or through the cinema industry. One direction in which I see this project developing in the future is through questions around the connection between Valerii Chkalov and his legacy, specifically with respect to Gagarin’s celebrity text and the Space Race.

These future interests aside, it is worth noting that Gagarin provides an opportunity for concluding comments on celebrity in the second world. In his study, *Soviet Space Mythologies*, Slava Gerovitch argues that the

cosmonauts faced a fundamental tension between their public persona and their professional identity. The Stakhanovites’ mission was tied to their profession: they called on other workers to imitate their productivity drive. Stalin’s hero aviators attracted masses

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<sup>97</sup>Works about Gagarin were produced, however, after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Pavel Parkhomenko’s 2013 film, *Gagarin: Pervyi v kosmose*, 2013, for example).

into aviation clubs to create a large supply of pilots for the Air Force. Yet the cosmonauts' mission was not to recruit a large number of new cosmonauts . . . The cosmonauts set a moral example and carried a political message, rather than blazed a career path for the masses. The cosmonauts' professional accomplishments made them into celebrities, but in their function as celebrities they no longer needed their professional identity. To maintain their public credentials, Aleksei Stakhanov had to continue setting new records, and Valerii Chkalov had to keep flying. The cosmonauts publicly acted as propagandists, educators, and ambassadors, but not as professional pilots. They talked about peace, friendship, and science, but not about the details of their flights. Six out of eleven first cosmonauts never flew into space again, despite their best efforts to stay on the active cosmonaut list. To function efficiently as symbols, the cosmonauts had to stop being cosmonauts. (153)

Although it is certainly the case that many Soviet stars became celebrities as a result of their professional training, Gerovitch's claim—"cosmonauts had to stop being cosmonauts"—fails to recognize one of the most fundamental components of the celebrity premise. Although professional accomplishments often greatly contribute to fame and notoriety, Gagarin's image became crystallized to the Soviet public—and to the world—when he landed in Moscow after his flight. Andrew Jenks recounts the story of the cameraman who filmed Gagarin disembarking from a plane on 14 April.

Gagarin appears at the doorway of the plane, rapidly comes down the stairs and starts to march along the carpet strip towards the stand to the accompaniment of a military band. Through the eyepiece of the camera I see that one of his boot-laces has got loose. He casts a quick glance on it and keeps on marching. He stops in front of Khrushchev, salutes him and reports briskly that the government assignment has been successfully fulfilled. (qtd. in "Conquering space" 136)

Journalists debated whether to cut the footage that featured Gagarin's untied shoelace, but the cosmonaut insisted that the moment remain, reflecting "the image of sincerity and truthfulness that he preferred to project to his adoring public" ("Conquering space" 136). Gerovitch's argument contends that second-world celebrities must be tied to their professional accomplishments in order to maintain their fame and popularity. I would argue that this dissertation debunks this myth, demonstrating, rather, the importance of the celebrity persona and fame as part of the greater

process of celebrification in Soviet society and the crucial participation of celebrities to the cultural history of the USSR.

Thaw-era celebrities functioned as inspirational symbols for Soviet progress and socialist values for “ordinary” citizens, as well as stars of Soviet pride for international audiences, all the while representing the importance of state campaigns. The value of this project lies just as much in understanding the varying components of celebrity images as it does the cultural history of the Soviet Union as viewed from the perspective of celebrification. While it is possible to identify characteristics of the socialist celebrity that are consistent across case study examinations, an exploration of fame in the second-world context also reinforces the notion that the celebrity text will continue to evolve in the current Russian cultural environment. The Thaw-era celebrity’s persistence in playing a role on the post-Soviet cultural landscape will only continue to reveal more about the importance of the celebrity figure in the second-world system and the critical fixture of celebrities in Soviet cultural narratives. In looking to celebrities of the past it is possible, perhaps, to renegotiate the ways that we understand Soviet and current Russian cultural histories.

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