

4 Co-Producing Cold War Culture

East-West Film-Making and Cultural Diplomacy

» Marsha Siefert

Cinema has long been claimed as a producer of 'dreamworlds', and more than one commentator has noted the chronological coincidence between the industrialisation of the film industry and the Bolshevik Revolution.¹ Film scholars have also documented the dialogic aspects of Hollywood and Soviet Goskino film rivalry and their images of each other as reflecting the state of international relations throughout the Cold War. Hollywood offers a range of such landscapes from *Red Danube* to *Red Dawn*.² Soviet cinema too has its cinematic Cold War scenarios and stereotypes, such as the American journalists who engage in *The Russian Question* (1947), or *Night on the 14th Parallel* (1971).³ This chapter addresses a related development within the post-war international film industry – the rise of films produced by more than one nation. Between 1953 and 1985, the Soviet Union realised well over 100 co-produced films, many across the 'curtain' with France, Italy, Norway and Japan. Building on one of the themes of this volume – investigating those cultural agents who desired to escape the rigidity of East-West divides – this chapter will focus on the dynamics and dilemmas of Soviet co-produced films.

Soviet attempts to co-produce films, especially with the West, represent a challenge that is in part shared with European film industries – the competition with Hollywood. Even when they are formally introduced as part of the Soviet film

1 The author would like to thank Sergei Dobrynin and Sergei Kapterev, two fine scholars of Russian and Soviet film, for their invaluable help with archival documents. The interest of Denise Youngblood and of Tony Shaw, whose *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010) breaks new ground in this topic, has been much appreciated. This chapter is part of the author's book project on Soviet film co-productions.

2 Harlow Robinson, *Russians in Hollywood, Hollywood's Russians: Biography of an Image* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2007); Michael Strada and Harold Troper, *Friend or Foe? Russians in American Film and Foreign Policy, 1933-1991* (Lanham, MD.: Scarecrow Press, 1997); Tony Shaw, *Hollywood's Cold War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

3 For examples see Stephen Hutchings (ed.), *Russia and its Other(s) on Film: Screening Intercultural Dialogue* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Sergei Dobrynin, 'The Silver Curtain: Representations of the West in Soviet Cold War Films', *History Compass* 7, no. 3 (2009), p. 862-878.

bureaucracy, co-productions are presented as an economic arrangement, as a way to compete with Hollywood's market dominance. Of course co-production is neither merely 'an economic initiative (...) nor is it simply a means of spreading costs. It is also a symbolic intervention.'⁴ Once a nation moves to make a film collaboratively with another nation, the representation of one's own national heritage and culture in relation to the other is called into question and requires negotiation. The complications come not just in the choice of film subjects or scenarios, but also from different traditions of storytelling. In these traditions, again, the Soviet Union may share with Europe an ideal more akin to art than commerce. Added to this pressure is the economic model of a successful – popular and profitable – film, which demanded the recognisable stars and blockbuster elements that Hollywood had perfected. The Soviet film bureaucracy wanted to control its own representations, themes and messages, especially in projecting its image abroad, but periodically recognised that some compromise might be necessary to penetrate the global film market. Their centralised system of production and bureaucratic control over film topics and scripts made working with another country even more complicated. In spite of these obstacles Soviet interest in producing films with the West persisted and in turn introduced the participation of non-state actors, like private film companies and producers, into the Cold War contest. The Soviet efforts to co-produce films on their own terms exhibit a multilayered dynamic process in the negotiation and export of cultural influence during the Cold War.

The idea of film co-production recapitulates other types of treaty negotiations and co-operation in Cold War diplomacy between the Soviet Union and other nations. The equality of each partner was crucial to Soviet aims, as exemplified by several collaborative projects in science, including the famous joint space flight in 1975.⁵ The Soviet rhetoric of 'peaceful co-existence' emphasised such parity, while times of trouble saw tit-for-tat responses. Soviet officials described cinematic cooperation as 'joint film' to emphasise that the partnership was more than production but also included script and artistic expertise. That phrase was diplomatically enshrined in the 1958 US-USSR Lacy-Zarubin cultural exchange agreement and used in most Soviet documents.

This chapter begins with an exploration of how co-producing films fits into the international film industry and the practice of Cold War cultural diplomacy. The next section examines the Soviet motives and intentions – both economic

4 Graham Murdock, 'Trading Places: The Cultural Economy of Co-Production', in Sofia Blind and Gerd Hallenberger (eds.), *European Co-Production in Television and Film* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1996), p. 103-114, quotation p. 107.

5 The mutual reinforcement of different types of Soviet-American 'collaborative' projects is suggested by an article in *Soviet Film* (July 1975) in which their correspondent interviews Cosmonaut Alexey Elsieiev, head of the Soviet-American flight, about his relations with the cinema both as a viewer and as a 'star'.

and political – for film co-production through archival documents and attention to the institutionalisation of a specific department – Sovinfil – during the late 1960s. The chapter closes by discussing three co-produced ‘biographical films’ from 1969-1971 to illustrate Soviet experience in co-operating with Europe and ‘filming with the enemy.’

Co-productions, Europe and the International Film Industry

Co-produced films must be situated within the context of the international film industry in which national film industries compete for prestige and market share. Film co-productions are just one of several formulae for multiplying a film’s potential to cross national boundaries – for audience, profits and cultural politics – that developed over the twentieth century. Much of this effort exploited the export potential of films made for a domestic audience. Before the coming of sound film in the late 1920s, film could be transformed for export by substituting subtitles in the language of the receiving country. Sound film brought many experiments in multiple language films, such as the Paramount studios in France and the German studio Ufa’s expansion in the German sphere of influence during the 1930s and early 1940s.⁶ These co-operative ventures might feature a star or locations from a second country, a storyline shared by one or more countries, or a genre like melodrama or musical that more easily crossed national lines. Often films were shot twice on the same set, each time in a different language with variations in stars, dialogue or plot adapted for the receiving audiences. Film finance also took many forms, depending upon the role of the state in supporting and regulating the film industry. The range of options for how various components of film production and distribution could be divided or shared, therefore, were already present in the interwar years.

The onset of the Cold War coincided with hard times for all film industries, including Hollywood. Faced with rising competition from television, a loss of necessary profits from all-but-destroyed European markets, and the legal dismemberment of its oligopoly of production and distribution, post-war Hollywood began to produce films in Europe and elsewhere as ‘runaway’ productions, benefitting from

6 Richard Maltby and Rush Vasey, ‘The International Language Problem: European Reactions to Hollywood’s Conversion to Sound’, in *Hollywood in Europe: Experiences of a Cultural Hegemony*, David W. Ellwood and Rob Kroes (eds.), (Amsterdam: vu University Press, 1994); Chris Wahl, “‘Paprika in the blood’: On ufa’s Early Sound Films Produced in/about/for/with Hungary’, *Spectator* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2007), p. 11-20; Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany’s Historical Imaginary* (London/New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 120; Sibylle M. Sturm and Arthur Wohlgemuth (eds.), *Hallo? Berlin? Ici Paris!: Deutsch-Französische Filmbeziehungen, 1918-1939* (Munich: Edition Text+Kritik, 1996).

the lower costs, exotic locations, and local personnel, and spending the export film profits that could not be taken out of the country. ‘Hollywood on the Tiber’ is the most famous example.⁷

European film industries began to revive by the late 1950s, and they, too, began to look to co-production as a way to boost productivity, to share production costs and to increase the number of cinema-goers. Between 1949 and 1964, clustering toward the 1960s, European film industries co-produced over 1,000 films, primarily through bilateral national agreements emphasising cultural affinities.⁸ France and Italy led the European co-producers, although Spain also was highly active.⁹ In many cases these co-productions were official, commencing with a treaty of cooperation whereby each participating government recognised the film as a product of ‘national culture’ and might therefore offer subsidies or tax breaks. Less formal arrangements might be made between international partners, especially when a Hollywood studio wanted to invest in a film. The key variables were how the film production divided responsibility for creative decisions, from casting and script to the finished film, including stars, locations, and stories, as well as how territories for distribution and revenue were allocated. Often films that started as co-productions turned out to be more about acquiring an international star, engaging less expensive labour and/or locations in another country, and obtaining European financing, rather than collaboration in terms of subject, script and style.¹⁰

Soviet Films and Cold War Cultural Diplomacy

The Soviet film industry confronted similar problems in attempting to make and export technologically sophisticated and appealing films in their bid for ‘cultural supremacy’ in the Cold War.¹¹ During Stalin’s last years the Soviet studio system

7 Toby Miller, *Global Hollywood 2* (London: BFI, 2005).

8 Anne Jäckel, *European Film Industries* (London: BFI, 2003); Marsha Siefert, ‘Twentieth-Century Culture, “Americanization”, and European Audiovisual Space’, in Konrad Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (eds.), *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 164-193.

9 George Michael Luyken, ‘The Business of Co-Productions: Simply Sharing Costs or Building a New European Audiovisual Culture?’ in Blind and Hallenberger, *European Co-Production in Television and Film*, p. 115-126, 116; Alejandro Pardo, ‘Spanish Co-Productions: Commercial Need or Common Culture’, in Sandra Barriaes-Bouche and Marjorie Attignol Salvodon (eds.), *Zoom In, Zoom Out: Crossing Borders in Contemporary European Cinema* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), p. 89-127.

10 Recent examples have been called ‘Euro-puddings’ due to less-than-satisfactory cinematic results. For post-1989 European co-production financing in Eastern Europe, see Anne Jäckel, ‘Cultural Cooperation in Europe: The Case of British & French Co-productions with Central and Eastern Europe’, *Media, Culture & Society* 9, no. 1 (1997), p. 111-120.

11 David Caute, *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

had been crippled by doctrinal supervision.¹² Film trade with the West had virtually come to a halt, with the dearth of domestic films being supplemented by old Hollywood films and ‘trophy’ films from the war years. After 1953, Soviet filmmakers had some leeway to boost the numbers and quality of films, so they wanted access to the latest Western films and techniques and to re-enter the international film world.¹³ Film was discussed at the 1955 Geneva meeting of Foreign Ministers in which France, the UK and the US proposed a seventeen-point plan for exchanging media with the Soviet Union. While the USSR rejected the initiative, they remained open to bilateral or multilateral agreements.¹⁴ Bilateral agreements were to become the norm in film projects and the USSR signed a cultural agreement with France the next year.

Arranging film ‘co-operation’ with the US proved more difficult, however. Exchange visits of Soviet and American delegations resumed in 1955¹⁵ and Boris Polevoi, the *Pravda* correspondent who led the Soviet journalistic delegation, published his *American Diaries* in 1956. Polevoi’s confidential 16-page report was written for the Central Committee. Amidst the advice he offered about how to better communicate the socialist message to Americans, he commented specifically on the film industry. ‘In the course of our meetings in Hollywood,’ he wrote, the idea arose of corresponding American and Soviet film festivals of each others’ films, an idea ‘ardently supported by filmmakers, by studio executives, and by the so-called Hollywood “tycoons”.’ Polevoi thought it would be ‘the right thing to do.’¹⁶ In August of the following year, a similar two-week trip was made by the Soviet deputy minister of culture in charge of film – ‘the highest ranking cultural emissary to visit the United States in the last decade.’ In an interview he stated that his ministry was ‘open-minded’ about ‘barter’ in the entertainment field, offering three propositions. One was again reciprocal film festivals and another was the exchange of actresses and actors to star in each other’s films – when asked, he

12 Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

13 For an excellent analysis, see Sergei Kapterev, ‘Illusionary Spoils: Soviet Attitudes toward American Cinema during the Early Cold War’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 10, no. 4 (Fall 2009), p. 779-807.

14 Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), p. 14-15.

15 On Moscow’s initiative in these years see J.D. Parks, *Culture, Conflict and Coexistence: American–Soviet Cultural Relations, 1917-1958* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland, 1983), chapter 10.

16 *Rossiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii* [hereafter RGANI], f. 5, op.15, d.734, p.131-145, here p. 140-141. The meaning of this trip for cultural diplomacy is nicely elaborated by Rósa Magnúsdóttir in ‘Mission Impossible? Selling Soviet Socialism to Americans, 1955-1958’, in Jessica C.E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried (eds.), *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010), p. 50-74. I thank her for sharing this document with me.

'wouldn't mind trading for Marilyn [Monroe].' The last was a 'joint production' by both motion picture industries.¹⁷

The idea was also raised by visiting film-makers in Moscow. The most dramatic anticipation was publicity surrounding Hollywood producer Mike Todd's visit in April of 1956, when he boasted that he would shoot 'War and Peace' in Russia as a co-production, a claim that was later denied by Soviet authorities.¹⁸ The idea was kept alive, however, in a long letter by a well-known Soviet playwright published in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* the following year.¹⁹ 'Let's Make a Film Together,' he wrote Mike Todd, and suggested an epic film depicting Russian-American relations during the American Civil War featuring Abraham Lincoln and Alexander II among others. He had a scenario ready. 'I don't know who is to blame' for the failure to reach an agreement, he stated. 'But that is not the main thing. No big venture ever started without difficulties and even some disappointments. However that may be (...) at this particular time it is essential that cultural ties between our countries be broadened in every way (...). The wider the world, the more interesting the life.'²⁰

The Soviet press continued to promote the idea of joint films. *Sovetskaia Kultura*, writing on 1 January 1958, declared that 'such films are one of the many aspects of cultural co-operation. In spite of the intrigues of reaction, cultural ties are growing and being expanded. Ever louder sounds the voice of art; it knows no boundaries, it opens to people perspectives, paths for the future, it speaks great goals. Art serves the cause of peace.'²¹ On 23 January *Izvestia* published a list of 'Jointly Produced Films,' several – with India, Finland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia – already completed. A list of films in process, primarily with socialist partners, demonstrated the breadth of their efforts: literary adaptations with Bulgaria, Hungary and Greece, heroic tales with Egypt and Romania, a scenario 'of great interest' entitled 'Moscow-Peking', and with France a story of 'the fighting friendship' of wartime aviators.²²

Thus it is not surprising that Soviet negotiators continued to press for joint films in their cultural negotiations with the United States. A very general provision to that effect was included as part of the US-USSR cultural exchange agreement signed on 27 January 1958: 'To recognize the desirability and usefulness of organizing joint production of artistic, popular science and documentary films and of

17 'Russia Ready for Talks on Film "Barter"', *Chicago Daily Tribune* (27 August 1956), p. 16.

18 'Todd Seen Shooting "War and Peace" in Russia as Co-Production', *Variety* (11 April 1956).

19 'Let Us Make a Film Together: Open letter to Mr. Michael Todd', *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (3 October 1957), 4, trans. in *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* [hereafter CDSPP] 40, no. 9 (13 November 1957), p. 16-17.

20 Op. cit, 'Let Us Make a Film'. *Variety* also reprinted this letter.

21 Open Society Archives, Budapest. r.r.g., 'Films and "Guided Creativity"', Office of the Political Advisor, Radio Free Europe/Munich, Background Information USSR (8 August 1958). Citation on p. 20, footnote 9.

22 'Jointly Produced Films', *Izvestia*, 23 January 1958, p. 4. CDSPP 4, no. 10 (5 March 1958), p. 45.

the conducting, not later than May 1958, of concrete negotiations between Soviet Union film organizations and u.s. film companies on this subject (...). The subject matter of the films will be mutually agreed upon by the two parties.'²³ These concrete negotiations turned out to be quite protracted. According to a us participant, the us delegation 'must have appeared to the Soviets as a scene straight from a Hollywood movie,' as they entered the Ministry of Culture conference room sporting dark sunglasses and deep tans.²⁴ Nonetheless a further agreement on film exchange including the approval of joint productions was signed on 9 October of that year.²⁵

A skeptical analysis of the meaning of the Soviet co-production effort was provided by Radio Free Europe's Office of the Political Advisor in a 25-page August 1958 report on the Soviet film industry called 'Films and Guided Creativity'.²⁶ Calling co-productions 'one of the propaganda vehicles used by the Communists for some time,' the analyst sees them becoming more numerous and more important within the framework of the steadily growing 'Soviet cultural offensive.'²⁷ Their value to all the 'Communist countries' included their access to funds, facilities and technical skills from the West, specifically France and Italy. The RFE analyst also affirms Western interest – the large and virtually untapped market, the competition from domestic television, and the Soviet willingness to co-produce with any country, including the United States, and lists the number of ongoing and planned Soviet and East European co-productions with other countries.

In spite of these pronouncements, Soviet co-productions were rare during the Khrushchev years, with fewer than twenty co-produced films completed before 1965. One might attribute this absence to many causes, not the least of which is the difficulty of realising any film co-production. From the socialist side, film industry personnel from Hungary and Poland would have been less likely to seek co-productions with the USSR for some time after 1956. The 1958 concept of 'guided creativity' suggested already a more cautious approach to approved films, a conservatism that intensified with the 'literary ferment' that ensued after the October 1961 Communist Party conference and spread to the film industry by

23 Section VII, item 5, 'United States and u.s.s.r. Sign Agreement on East-West Exchanges', [us] *Department of State Bulletin* (17 February 1958), p. 243-247, quotation on p. 245.

24 Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: u.s. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 134.

25 'United States and u.s.s.r. Agree on Films To Be Exchanged', [us] *Department of State Bulletin* (3 November 1958), p. 696-698.

26 R.r.g., 'Films and "Guided Creativity"', p. 19-21.

27 This phrase became codified in early Cold War parlance with the publication of Frederick C. Barghoorn, *The Soviet Cultural Offensive: The Role of Cultural Diplomacy in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

spring of 1963.²⁸ Internally the Soviet film bureaucracy was more concerned with repertoire control and retained the complex hierarchical administrative system of film theme and genre plans along with multilayered script approval, which made the process of obtaining approval for a film long and cumbersome. Also, the Soviet film industry was state-supported and film directors were paid according to the prestige of the film they were allotted in the plan, and so the rewards and incentives were internal to the system. Economics mattered, however. All movie theatres throughout the USSR had to contribute a portion of their receipts to the government to finance future films, and so they programmed films that the audience would pay to see. Often these were foreign imports or genre films that were not so highly regarded by the Soviet film bureaucracy.²⁹ During the years of the 'thaw' the 1930s idea of 'cinema for the millions'³⁰ had re-emerged along with the other demands of the global marketplace and East-West rivalry to produce conditions for cautious experiments in co-produced films.

Soviet Co-Produced Films from 1965

With the exception of two films produced with Germany in the late 1920s,³¹ the Soviet efforts to co-produce films began in 1953.³² Despite the flurry surrounding the 1958 exchange agreement with the US, subsequent Soviet co-productions numbered only one or at most two films a year.³³ The topics and partners were

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- 28 See, for example, Priscilla Johnson, *Khrushchev and the Arts: The Politics of Soviet Culture, 1962-1964* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965), p. 95-101; Josephine Woll, *Real Images: Soviet Cinema and the Thaw* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2000), p. 103-III.
- 29 Marsha Siefert, 'From Cold War to Wary Peace: American Culture in the USSR and Russia', in Alexander Stephan (ed.) *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy and Anti-Americanism After 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), p. 185-217; Sudha Rajagopalan, *Indian Film in Soviet Cinemas: The Culture of Movie-Going after Stalin* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009); Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), chapter 2.
- 30 Richard Taylor, 'Ideology as Mass Entertainment: Boris Shumyatsky and Soviet Cinema in the 1930s', in Richard Taylor and Ian Christie (eds.), *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 193-216.
- 31 Moscow's Mezhrabpom Film Studios made these first two co-productions with Prometheus Studios in Berlin (*Salamander*, 1928 and *Zhivoi trup* [The Living Corpse] 1929). Louis Harris Cohen, *The Cultural Political Traditions and Developments of the Soviet Cinema from 1917 to 1972* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), p. 547.
- 32 See Sergei Kapterev, *Post-Stalinist Cinema and the Russian Intelligentsia, 1953-1960: Strategies of Self-Representation, De-Stalinization, and the National Cultural Tradition* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2008), p. 285-288 for an analysis of one of the earliest Soviet co-productions, *The Heroes of Shipka*, made with Bulgarian filmmakers in 1954.
- 33 To put this number in perspective, in 1965 France was involved in about 100 international co-productions. Luyken, 'The Business of Co-Productions', p. 116. For the 8 July 1967 version of the French-Soviet Film

predictable, with safe genres like historical dramas, war films and children's films. The co-producers were usually from the 'bloc' or countries friendly with the Soviet Union.³⁴ The numbers of co-produced films showed a marked increase in the mid-1960s, with five co-productions appearing in 1965, two in 1966 and six in 1967. Publicity stressed the co-operation at all levels of the film, from screenwriting to location shooting. For example, the Soviet-Romanian co-production of the World War II film, *The Tunnel*, was directed by a Romanian who co-wrote the screenplay with a Soviet writer, with Soviet actors in the cast, location shooting in Romania and studio shooting in the Soviet Union: '[The] *Tunnel* is a psychological film (...) about friendship and unity of ideals born in unity of struggle.'³⁵ *Soviet Film*, the glossy export magazine translated into six languages (but not Russian) and sent only abroad, announced a new round of joint films in early 1966. The Chief Editor at Mosfilm proclaimed that they were 'an important means for promoting cultural ties' and were sometimes 'unavoidable' because the 'destinies of different nations are bound up closely.' Prominent among the announced films were two with the West – *And They Marched to the East* with Italy and *Normandie-Nieman* with France.³⁶ This renewed attention and small but significant increase in the number of film co-productions must be understood in light of the new leadership in the USSR and the Soviet film industry.

The Soviet film industry in 1965

In October 1964, Khrushchev had been ousted and Alexei Kosygin took over Khrushchev's position as Soviet Premier, while Leonid Brezhnev became General Secretary. Kosygin's economic reforms included a move from heavy industry and military hardware to light industry and consumer goods, and the principle of 'material interest' [or profit motive] was officially recommended by the 1965 Plenary of the Central Committee.³⁷ Although Brezhnev disagreed with this policy and emerged as the man in power by 1970, Kosygin remained in his post.

Co-Production and Exchange agreement, see <http://www.cnc.fr/CNC_GALLERY_CONTENT/DOCUMENTS/UK/Film_coproduction_agreement/239_agreement_Russia_08_07_1967.pdf> (accessed October 2010).

34 A US-USSR co-production had been in the works since 1962 but was halted at the end of 1965. For this story see Marsha Siefert, 'Meeting at a Far Meridian: American-Soviet Cooperation in and on Film in the 1960s', in Patryk Babiracki and Kenyon Zimmer (eds.), *Cold War Crossings: International Travel and Exchange in the Soviet Bloc, 1940s-1960s* (College Station, TX, forthcoming).

35 Anne Jäckel, 'France and Romanian Cinema 1896-1999', *French Cultural Studies* 11, no. 33 (October 2000), p. 409-425.

36 'In Collaboration with', *Soviet Film* 112 (September 1966), p. 5.

37 Steven P. Hill, 'The Soviet Film Today', *Film Quarterly* 20, no. 4 (Spring 1967), p. 33-52, here p. 44.

This period opened up opportunities for the film industry in various ways. First, between 1953 and 1963, there was no separate ministry for film, which was subordinated to the Ministry of Culture. In 1963, film once again was administered by a separate bureaucratic entity, the Cinematography Committee at the USSR Council of Ministers (Goskino), which in 1965 was again reorganised and raised in status.³⁸ Second, during the 'thaw' most 'film workers' belonged to other unions, in particular the Writers Union, and had no union of their own. In the late 1950s, film-makers began taking steps to create a separate organisation and finally succeeded in establishing the Union of Film Workers at the First National Congress of Film Workers held in Moscow in 1965.³⁹

Also in 1965, the values of commerce and 'entertainment' returned to the Soviet film industry, as represented by the Experimental Film Studio, which was set up in the second half of 1965 to make films with potential for export as well as for domestic appeal.⁴⁰ The studio's artistic supervisor was Grigorii Chukhrai, director of *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959) and the executive producer was Vladimir Pozner Sr., a frequent player in co-production stories given his international experience as a 1940s Hollywood screenwriter and Paris correspondent. Konstantin Simonov, a prominent author who visited Hollywood in 1946, headed the script department.⁴¹ The Experimental Film Studio was described as similar to the American film entity United Artists, with no formal studio facilities and with directors and actors hired on a film-by-film contract basis. Films were to be initiated by writing a film script rather than the usual literary scenarios. The proportions of time spent on films were reassigned, with less shooting time and more time for preparation and editing. Compensation schemes also built in a percentage of profit, with a special consideration of film genre. As Chukhrai stated in an interview: 'The existing "planning" of the creative process causes direct harm to quality,' and a new system would be instituted whereby 'the economic effectiveness of the studio will depend entirely on the people's evaluation of the finished product.'⁴² Although the Experimental Film Studio ended in 1976, it represented an attempt to minimise bureaucratic interference and depart from the 'gray genres' favoured by the authorities.⁴³

38 Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, p. 58.

39 Val S. Golovskoy with John Rimberg, *Behind the Soviet Screen: The Motion-Picture Industry in the USSR 1972-1982*, trans. Steven Hill (Ann Arbor MI: Ardis, 1986), p. 37.

40 Hill, 'Soviet Film Today'.

41 Anna Lawton, *Before the Fall: Soviet Cinema in the Gorbachev Years* (Washington DC: New Academia, 2004), p. 82.

42 'The Future of an Experiment: Lenin Prize Winner Grigori Chukhrai Speaks', *Sovetskaia Rossia* (19 May 1965), 3, trans. CDSP 17, no. 22 (23 June 1965), p. 31-32.

43 George Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers: The Struggle for Artistic Autonomy and the Fall of the Soviet Film Industry* (University Park PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), p. 125; Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, p. 57-62.

Yet, as always in the Soviet Union, there were countervailing tendencies. When Alexei Romanov from the Central Committee's Department of Propaganda and Agitation⁴⁴ was dramatically named head of the Cinematography Committee by the USSR Council of Ministers in March 1963,⁴⁵ he brought strong ideological expectations for Soviet film to promote 'the political enlightenment and aesthetic education of the people' in accordance with 'the interests of communist construction and the Soviet nation.'⁴⁶ This appointment had come in the midst of Khrushchev's crackdown on the arts, which for film culminated in the controversy surrounding the awarding of first prize at the July 1963 Moscow Film Festival to Fellini's *8 1/2*; Romanov was forced to declare in a press conference: 'We reject any implication that the jury's verdict marks a retreat in our own ideological struggle – contrary to misleading comments in the foreign press.'⁴⁷ Thus the change in leadership and atmosphere must be interpreted cautiously. While certainly the Experimental Film Studio provided an opportunity for talented film-makers, as well as an attempt to improve the recognisably laggard film production, its viability and longevity were never secure.

From 1965, the emphasis within Goskino appeared to be expansion, both in the numbers of films made for mass audiences and in popular genres, as well as in terms of its own power. As popular movies increased economic rewards and also migrated to or were made for television, so too did the departments and activities related to film, including film distribution, advertising and international relations, grow and prosper.⁴⁸ The new atmosphere of striving for popularity and power through industry-building was displayed at the fifth International Moscow Film Festival held from 5-20 July 1967, coincidentally the 50th anniversary of the Revolution, and attended by several international stars and directors. In his report to the US Secretary of State, the Chair of the US delegation, Jack Valenti – the recently appointed Head of the Motion Picture Association of America – found the Moscow theatre at 10 o'clock in the morning 'filled and jumping with people (...) applauding and cheering response from the moment that the trademark of a U.S. film appeared on the screen.' Noting the interest of the Soviet public in American films, he adds that 'creative artists in films speak a common language which most of the time rises above doctrinal and transitory stereotypes,' with film offering 'a most promising and fruitful channel of communications.' He also had 'private conversations' with 'Chairman Romanov', which 'led to improved understanding

44 Golovskoy, *Behind the Soviet Screen*, p. 13-14.

45 Peter Johnson (Reuters), 'New Film "Czar" Names In Red Cultural Shakeup', *Washington Post* (24 March 1963).

46 Quoted in Woll, *Real Images*, p. 225.

47 This story has been related in several contexts; see e.g., Cauter, *The Dancer Defects*, p. 235-239, quotation on p. 237.

48 Woll, *Real Images*, p. 226-227.

and perhaps cleared the way for more substantive results of benefit to both countries in the future.⁴⁹ Just one week after the end of this festival Alexei Romanov addressed a long and comprehensive memo to the CPSU Central Committee in support of a new unit to deal directly with joint film productions.⁵⁰

The Soviet Case for Film Co-productions – East and West

The July 1967 memo begins by recounting several of the coproductions (or ‘joint productions’) completed or in the works for the ‘socialist countries,’ tactfully one from each. The titles listed included those genres likely to find favour with the Party leadership: socialist biographies like *Lenin in Poland* (*Lenin v Pol'she*, Sergei Iutkevich, 1965), historical dramas from the Russian Civil War, like *The Red and the White* (*Csillagosok, katonák*, Miklós Jancsó, 1967) co-produced with Hungary,⁵¹ and World War II dramas with Romania (*The Tunnel*, Francisc Munteanu, 1966) and Yugoslavia (*Checked – No Mines*, Zdravko Velimirovic and Iurii Lysenko, 1965). Documentaries about the Soviet Union from film-makers of socialist countries and Soviet use of technical facilities of film studios in socialist countries were also mentioned. ‘The volume and the variety of forms of such work have significantly increased in recent years.’

The memo next elaborates the advantages of recent Soviet co-productions with Western countries, specifically mentioning France, Italy and Japan. New agreements had been signed with Italy in January 1967 and with France during the visit of the French Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou. ‘The business and artistic circles of France and Italy have great hopes for these agreements,’ says Romanov, ‘since they see in them an opportunity, to break free, to an extent, from the domination of the American film monopolies and to strengthen their national cinemas.’⁵² Throughout the memo, the language of cultural contest and presumed shared alliances in the struggle against Hollywood are emphasised. Romanov’s analysis was not dissimilar to complaints made by the Europeans themselves. He provides

49 Jack Valenti, ‘Report of the United States Delegation to the V. International Film Festival, Moscow, U.S.S.R., July 5 through July 20, 1967.’ Unpublished report submitted to the US Secretary of State, Foy Kohler Papers, Manuscript collection no. 036, Canaday Center, University of Toledo Libraries.

50 RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 64, ll. 136-142 [Stamped 27 July 1967].

51 Jancsó’s film was not finished at the time of the memo; his ‘ambiguous and distinctly non-heroic portrayal of events’ displeased the Soviet authorities who made changes to the film for the premiere and later banned it. Jancsó still managed to have his own version distributed. See John Cunningham, *Hungarian Cinema from Coffee House to Multiplex* (London: Wallflower, 2004), p. 111-112; Mira and Anton J. Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film after 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 395.

52 RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 64, l.137.

data about American investment in English and French films and explicates fully his perception of the situation in Italy:

In Italy, the American film monopolies have managed to capture both the distribution and production of Italian films. More than three-fourths of Italian films are made on American money; Italian actors, directors, and even producers are hired by representatives of American film companies. It is not rare that, due to this, Sovexportfilm, wishing to buy one or another Italian film, has either to negotiate with the American companies that own these films, or to cancel the purchase altogether.

This situation in the Italian cinema has put some renowned Italian directors, among them a number of communists, in a very difficult situation, and has left them without work (De Santis, [Roberto] Rossellini, [Carlo] Lizzani). Some progressive Italian directors are forced to make films for American film companies ([Vittorio] De Sica, Nanni Loy, Dino Risi).

Romanov concludes that cooperation with Italy and France would help 'the Soviet film industry accumulate the experience these countries possess, and then use the most progressive methods of modern film production in its own work,' a key concern for film-makers and also perceived as one of the reasons that Soviet films had difficulty penetrating the world market.

Romanov's other reasons for pursuing joint films recognise additional aspects of the cultural contest, even among their own socialist colleagues. For example, he mentions that the Western countries are already co-operating with the other socialist countries for joint films and mentions in particular Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and Poland. He relates this to 'considerable interest in analogous co-operation with the Soviet Union'; presumably, the success of other socialist countries would persuade the Soviet bureaucrats of a need to increase their influence. A second and compelling reason he offers is the 'huge artistic and commercial success' of the Soviet filmed version of *War and Peace* (Bondarchuk 1966) in Europe and Japan. In film industries success breeds imitation or at least multiplication. Thirdly, Romanov importantly places Soviet cinema within the global industry: 'It must be noted that in recent years *a general tendency has formed and is developing in the world cinema toward international co-operation in film production, and it would be sensible to use it.*'⁵³ This sentence is underlined in the document, presumably by a member of the Central Committee who also presumably found the idea 'sensible'.

To sum up, Romanov articulates what might be considered the most positive formula for combining economic gain with ideological goals.

53 RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 64, l.139. An accompanying note in the margin says 'Eto zdorovo', a colloquial Russian expression meaning roughly 'This is great', or 'This is cool'.

The implementation of the opportunities opening up in the area of Soviet international co-productions (*on subjects acceptable to us*) will allow the Soviet motion picture industry to combine the commercial goals with the tasks of international ideological influence in a more flexible way, will bring in additional hard-currency profits, and will act as another important channel through which we will be able to more actively propagandise the communist world-vision, the Soviet film art and the masters of our cinema on the world screens.⁵⁴

The memo closes with a bold evaluation of the Soviet film bureaucracy that forms the basis of his request. 'The Soviet cinema at present is not fully prepared to conduct a wide joint film cooperation with foreign countries.' Romanov enumerates the challenges in practical terms, from how to get sufficiently quick decisions from the authorities when negotiating with foreign film companies to how to pay for visiting foreign film dignitaries to the fact that Soviet studio representatives arrive for business meetings 'later than scheduled.' He even ventures economic comparisons like the difference in the costs of film production and its organisation, as well as in the salaries of actors and film personnel in the studios of the USSR and other socialist countries. He ends with a request 'to allow the Committee to create a special creative artistic unit that would centralize work on co-productions with foreign countries, as well as production services to foreign film companies.'

On 1 March 1968, the Deputy Chairman of the CPSU Central Committee's Department for Culture 'recalled' the letter, with the statement that 'at present, the Cinematography Committee at the USSR Council of Ministers is at work on a long-term plan of joint film productions which will be presented to the CPSU Central Committee. After this plan is confirmed, it will become possible to review the question of the Committee's rights and of the order in which joint film productions with foreign countries should proceed.'⁵⁵ The promise of 'new suggestions' did in fact materialise in December 1968. The All-Union Corporation of Joint Productions and Production Services for Foreign Film Organizations, or Sovinfilm, was created as one of the units under the Administration for External Relations of the USSR State Cinema Committee (Goskino), which also supervised Sovexportfilm for foreign trade and Sovinterfest for international film festivals. This organisation was to encourage co-productions and help integrate Soviet film-making into the global cinema marketplace. According to its President, Sovinfilm was first and foremost an 'economic organization. We are here to organize coproductions between the Soviet Union and any other country that has an interesting proposition.' The goal of Sovinfilm was to give aid, especially if a foreign producer wanted

54 RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 64, l.140-141; emphasis added.

55 RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 64, l.145. At this time the State Committee for Cinematography answered to the USSR Council of Ministers. Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time*, p. 30, fn1.

to shoot footage, etc. – ‘all the services – naturally, for a price.’⁵⁶ In another interview Sovinfilmm Chairman S.A. Kuznetsov listed a number of ongoing projects, but argued that the most important were those in which ‘our film studios participate as equal partners.’⁵⁷ Striving for this type of arrangement created the greatest challenge for the Soviet Union.

Soviet protestations about the importance of economics did not of course negate the problems of finding a suitable topic and developing an acceptable script for a co-production. Other European co-productions of the time, especially those aiming for artistic consideration, were also made on topics that were ‘politically consensual, aesthetically conventional, and rooted in high cultural traditions,’ with stories based on literary classics, grand historical narratives and cultural heroes.⁵⁸ An early co-ordinated project for European co-production sponsored by the Council of Europe had hoped to use the films to demonstrate the ‘historical process of [European] interchange which had been taking place throughout the centuries by less deliberate and conscious methods,’ but in the end each country contributed only one film, the styles so highly varied that the films had little circulation.⁵⁹ Throughout Europe in these years, prestige products adapted ‘great literature’ or the lives of ‘great men’ but genre films like melodrama and history crossed borders most easily.

Soviet Co-Produced Films after 1965

Foreign film-makers or entrepreneurs interested in working with the USSR readily understood that the choice of film subject ought to favourably project Soviet achievements, even if the suggestions elided the imperial Russian past and communist present.⁶⁰ Romanov’s memo affirms this choice:

The subjects suggested for co-productions are, as a rule, acceptable for our side (adaptations of Russian and Soviet classics, films based on the music of Russian composers). In recent times, they also include the events of the October revolu-

56 Otari V. Teneyshvili, quoted in Vladimir Pozner, ‘Sovinfilm, New USSR Body, to Oil Machinery for Co-Prod. with West’, *Variety* 257, no. 13 (11 February 1970), p. 29.

57 B. Vaulin, ‘At the Joint Production Headquarters’, *Novosti ekrana* (Vilnius), no. 47 (1969).

58 Tim Bergfelder, *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), p. 53-58.

59 C.H. Dand and J.A. Harrison, *Educational and Cultural Films: Experiments in European Co-Production* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1965).

60 The complexities for the Soviet interpretation of imperial Russian culture appeared long before the Cold War. See Kevin F. M. Platt and David Brandenberger (eds.), *Epic Revisionism: Russian History and Literature as Stalinist Propaganda* (Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).

tion and the Second World War (...). For large-scale joint film projects such subjects can be used as, e.g., the historical events of the Second World War or historic connections between the USSR and particular countries.⁶¹

As Romanov predicted, *War and Peace* (1968) literally and figuratively aided the Soviet desire to co-produce a large historical epic with the West. Sergei Bondarчук, favoured Soviet actor and director of *War and Peace*, used the Red Army as extras in this and in *Waterloo* (1970), an Italian/Soviet production in which the French were once again defeated. The Italian company Dino De Laurentis Cinematografica was provided with shooting locations, extras and pyrotechnics and featured many Soviet actors.⁶² International stars were also recruited to expand market potential. *Waterloo* starred Christopher Plummer as Wellington and Rod Steiger as Napoleon. Claudia Cardinale and Sean Connery appeared in the 1969 Italian/Soviet co-production *The Red Tent*.⁶³

Thus, the economic model of epic films and big stars, action and adventure, exciting locales and historical costumes was realised relatively soon after Sovinfilm's creation. By 1981, the Soviet co-production with France and Switzerland – *Teheran 1943* – starring Alain Delon, was the top-grossing film in the USSR for 1981.⁶⁴ Its description epitomises the thriller Soviet style:

The leaders of the German Reich are planning the assassination of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill. Carefully prepared by the aces of the German intelligence, the act was to take place in the autumn of 1943 during the Teheran conference of the allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. The film tells how that criminal political operation was uncovered and foiled. The action takes place in Germany, France, Britain, Switzerland, Iran, the USA and USSR.⁶⁵

For reasons of solidarity the Soviet Union pursued co-productions with other socialist countries in the socialist bloc and by the time of *perestroika* the Soviet Union had produced at least one or two films with each of the bloc countries, including Cuba, Vietnam, China and Mongolia. While the topic of socialist co-

61 RGANI, f. 5, op. 59, d. 64, l.139.

62 B. Vaulin, 'At the Joint Production Headquarters'.

63 Paula Michaels, 'Mikhail Kalatozov's The Red Tent: A Case Study in International Coproduction across the Iron Curtain', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 26, no. 3 (August 2006), p. 311-326. Connery apparently had just fallen out with the James Bond film producers and few in the USSR had seen the Bond films. Maria Kuvshinova, 'Film Scholar Sergei Lavrentiev on the History of Coproductions in the Soviet Union....' Interview, 5 January 2011; available at <<http://openspace.ru/cinema/projects/70/details/19612>>; (accessed 17 February 2011).

64 Available at <<http://encyclopedia.quickseek.com/index.php/>> (accessed 29 May 2006).

65 Advertisement in *Soviet Film* (April 1981).

productions goes beyond the scope of this chapter,⁶⁶ one example can illustrate how a socialist co-production attempted to involve western film-makers and ended up with a Soviet partner in attempting to make a film considered artistic in form, socialist in content, and yet still a commercial success – the 1971 biopic, *Goya*.

Usually discussed within the oeuvre of its prestigious director, Konrad Wolf, *Goya* is notable as a socialist co-production initiated by DEFA, the film studio of the G.D.R. The story is based on the 1951 novelised biography by Leon Feuchtwanger, a German exile in Hollywood. *Goya*'s transformation from a court portrait painter to an artist of revolution seemed a perfect socialist biography. Its history as a co-production, as narrated from German documents,⁶⁷ describes the hopes of the director and his colleagues in 1963 for a coalition with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, with the partners to provide both locations and 'actors with darker hair and eyes.' By 1964, DEFA managers for financial reasons also sought Western partners from Madrid, Paris and Munich, as well as government support for the plan 'to open up countries and markets for our cinema' as well as to gain more control over the development of German literary heritage to be adapted 'according to our national concept and duty.' Only with the failure of deals with a West German studio, a French actor and a Yugoslav studio, was a Soviet partner pursued, even though the idea had been broached as early as 1962 by the novelist's widow; translations of Feuchtwanger's work had a checkered but noticeable status in the USSR following his 1937 visit. In July 1966, Konrad Wolf discussed the possibility of a future joint film with Alexei Romanov during a trip to the Soviet Union and the next year attempted to negotiate a contract with Mosfilm, supported by the Soviet director Mikhail Romm, but the agreement failed.⁶⁸ The acquisition of Soviet partnership (and their large ruble contribution) only succeeded after Erich Honecker personally wrote to the Soviet minister of culture in 1971. In addition to DEFA and the Soviet studio Lenfilm, who supplied its star Donatas Banionis, the Sofia Feature Film Studio of Bulgaria and Bosna Film of Yugoslavia participated.

The appearance of the film in 1971 seemed to fit the more liberal artistic environment⁶⁹ and the interest in the pre-socialist cultural traditions and the appropri-

66 The dynamics of film co-operation, involving the rivalry and resistance of the countries in the Soviet bloc, is a much larger topic. Each country had its own film traditions and desire for independence from Moscow in their film-making efforts. This led them to negotiate their own co-production deals with each other and the West. For more see Marsha Siefert, 'East European Cold War Culture(s)? Commonalities, Alterities and Film Industries', in Annette Vowinckel, Thomas Lindenberger and Marcus Payk (eds.), *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

67 Mariana Zaharieva Ivanova, 'DEFA and East European Cinemas: Co-Productions, Transnational Exchange and Artistic Exchange', Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2011, p. 59-73.

68 Ivanova, 'DEFA', 71, cites the veto by the Soviet Vice Minister of Culture because the script 'lacked resonance with contemporary socialist reality.'

69 Seán Allan, 'DEFA: An Historical Overview', in Seán Allan and John Sandford (eds.), *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), p. 15-16.

ation of the traditional literary canon that emerged in the GDR in the early 1970s.⁷⁰ The lavish sets, the two-part story, the recreation of Inquisition Spain, the large amount of film shot, the detailed 150-page book accompanying the production, the potential marketing ‘tie-ins’ with Spanish concerts and the reproduction of Goya’s works⁷¹ all suggest that indeed, as Liehm and Liehm state, *Goya* aimed to synthesise three values that DEFA films [and Soviet films] had until then been trying in vain to achieve: artistic quality, recognition abroad and box-office success.⁷² Although respected, the film did not quite meet these expectations.

The film also struggled as a co-production, with criticism from the Soviet partners.⁷³ Lenfilm’s managing director demanded substantial revisions to the tribunal scene and shortened the ending by 20 minutes; their dramaturge objected to the ‘modernised’ language of the dialogues and requested an introduction for younger filmgoers.⁷⁴ The Soviet critique had one other referent, though – the Hollywood biopic about Goya that they had purchased and distributed in the late 1960s. Already in 1968, *Sovetskaia Rossiya* had complained about Ava Gardner’s ‘naked Maja’ when shown at the Red Sormovo Plant’s Palace of Culture,⁷⁵ and a prominent eight-page 1972 review of Goya led by ridiculing Gardner’s ‘lush pose’ one more time. In unifying ‘the artist and the life’,⁷⁶ the history of the film *Goya* also embodies Feuchtwanger’s subtitle – ‘the difficult road to knowledge’.

Cultural Export versus Co-Production

Two other examples that coincide with the creation of Sovinfilm and the renewed push toward co-productions display the Soviet hopes and concerns in trying to co-produce films on their own terms and especially on their own culture. These two efforts embody two international successes of Russian musical culture – the bass Feodor Chaliapin and the composer Peter Ilich Tchaikovsky. Mark Donskoi, veteran Soviet director best known for his film trilogy on the life of Maxim Gorky, made the case for why a filmed life of Chaliapin should *not* be a co-production in

70 Daniela Berghahn, ‘The Re-Evaluation of Goethe and the Classical Tradition in the Films of Egon Günther and Siegfried Kühn’, in Allan and Sandford (eds.), *DEFA: East German Cinema*, p. 222-223.

71 Larson Powell, ‘Breaking the Frame of Painting: Konrad Wolf’s *Goya*’, *Studies in European Cinema* 5, no. 2 (2008), p. 131-141, here p. 133.

72 Liehm and Liehm, *Most Important Art*, p. 363.

73 Foreign comparisons of the film with Tarkovsky’s biopic of the icon painter *Andrei Rublev*, released that year in the Soviet Union five years after its completion, would not have helped.

74 Ivanova, ‘DEFA’, p. 71-73.

75 I. Leshchevsky, ‘Why Buy Trashy Foreign Films? Newspaper Asks’, *Sovetskaia Rossiya* (17 April 1968), p. 3; CDSP 20, no. 16 (8 May 1968), p. 17-19; excerpted in *New York Times* (21 April 1968), IV, p. 13.

76 Irina Rubanova, Review of *Goya*, *Na ekranakh mira*, 4 (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972), p. 36-44.

a 15 December 1971 letter – to Comrade Brezhnev himself. He had dreamed of this film for over ten years and prepared a two-part script, he wrote; in fact the film had been announced already in the export magazine *Soviet Film* in 1969.⁷⁷ ‘As soon as they learned that I was going to make a film about Chaliapin,’ writes Donskoi, ‘foreign companies hastened to offer their services for a co-production. I have refused, since I believe that such a film should only be made in our country.’⁷⁸ He gives several reasons, among which are that his travels abroad reinforced the subject’s necessity. He also argues that Soviet cinema must go on the offensive, citing barriers put up against the distribution of Soviet films and the ‘billion dollars’ the FBI has allocated for the ideological war through the art of cinema.⁷⁹ He offers what would appear to be an appealing theme, the way in which many Soviet productions dealt with Russians who became famous abroad and did not return after the revolution:

The first film, *The Glory and the Life*, shows how the powerful sons of the era – the creators of a new, genuine art – were emerging from the depths of the people. The second film, *The Last Kiss*, deals with the tragedy of a man separated from his native land. The leitmotif is: ‘Russia can do without us, but we cannot do without her.’ This results in the conclusion: ‘No matter how rich and famous you are, if you don’t have native soil under your feet, if there are no dear eyes around – your happiness is lonely, and a lone man cannot be happy. The sun doesn’t shine in a foreign land!’

The request was ‘postponed’ and in spite of there being a full director’s two-part script, the film was never made. The usual explanation is that the ‘postponement’ was due to Donskoi’s co-author of the film script, the well-known poet and writer Alexander Galich.⁸⁰ Already warned in 1969 after the Western publication of a samizdat collection of his songs, Galich was expelled from the Writers’ Union on 29 December 1971, two weeks after Donskoi’s request. Soon thereafter he was expelled from the Union of Cinematographers and he left the country in January 1974. His participation makes Donskoi’s suggestion that there was co-production interest quite probable, since Galich had been to France twice as the writer for the French-Soviet co-production of the biopic on Petipa, the French ballet master in nineteenth-century Russia (*Third Youth*, Jean Dreuille, 1965). Another potential

77 ‘A Great Singer’, *Soviet Film* (October 1967), p. 12. The IMDb also lists this film as a 1969 production, and as late as August 1971 the *Musical Times* (112, no. 1542, p. 759) lists its subject and director.

78 TsKhSD, f.5, op. 63, d. 152, ll. P. 1-2; reprinted in V. Fomin (ed. & commentary), *Kinematograf ottepeli: dokumenty i svidetelstva* (Moscow: Materik, 1998), p. 171-172.

79 Donskoi also cites the newly formed PEN as part of this effort.

80 Fomin’s editorial comment confirms this reason.

co-producing country was Italy, as evidently urged by Chaliapin's son, Fedor Fedorovich Chaliapin. Galich's daughter tells a story that might also explain Donskoi's protests against co-production. Presumably a rich American offered to finance the film and Galich had no choice but to advise him to contact the Minister of Culture, E.A. Furtseva, who refused. 'When Donskoi joined the discussion, arguing that it would be nice to film in Paris and in America (...) Madam Minister cut him short: "You can very well shoot everything in Riga."' ⁸¹

A contrast to the *Chaliapin* example comes with a concurrent attempt initiated by the successful Russian émigré Hollywood composer, Dmitri Tiomkin, ⁸² to film a life of Tchaikovsky. He obtained a pledge of support from an American studio and their co-operation was announced in 1966. According to Alexander Slavnov, the head of the Foreign Section of the Moscow Cinema Committee, 'though made at a Soviet studio, [the film] is designed for the world market. Dmitri Temkin [sic], eminent American composer, will participate in the making of it. Warner Brothers have already signed a contract with Sovexportfilm for its distribution.' ⁸³ In what might be considered a typical distribution agreement, Warner Brothers would release the film in all countries outside the Soviet bloc and Finland. Mosfilm, the major Soviet studio, would supply the star, director, script and technicians while Warner Brothers was to pay for any international stars and to give advice on ways to give the Russian script more international appeal. In the us press *Tchaikovsky* was publicised as part of the renewal of the us-Soviet film exchange deal that had expired at the end of 1965. ⁸⁴ Later that year, the film was discussed at the first World Congress of the Screen Writers Guild in Hollywood, with representatives from 14 countries including the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. 'Warner-Soviet Film Plan seen as Help in Easing Tensions' read the 1966 headline. The article noted that the usual problem with co-productions was 'the trouble of finding a topic acceptable to both the Americans and the Russians,' but concluded that Tchaikovsky 'will not ruffle anyone's feathers.' ⁸⁵

By the time of its Russian premiere in the fall of 1970, *Tchaikovsky's* role as cultural ambassador had been undermined by the sale and resale of Warner Brothers, with the new management looking for sure moneymakers. When the film was

81 Alena Galich, quoted at <<http://www.bard.ru/article/24/07.htm>> (accessed 21 August 2010). Given that *Soviet Film* in October 1967 had advertised that filming would be done in Italy, France and America along with Russia, the events in this story must have occurred later.

82 His Hollywood success was notable for its American character. Tiomkin received Academy Awards for *High Noon*, *The High and the Mighty*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*, and composed the musical score for many other Westerns, including *Duel in the Sun*, *Giant*, and *The Alamo* plus the theme song for television's 'Rawhide'.

83 'in Collaboration With...', *Soviet Film* no. 9 (September 1966), p. 5.

84 Vincent Canby, 'U.S.-Soviet Deals on Films Pending', *New York Times* (26 February 1966), p. 14.

85 Harry Bernstein, 'Warner-Soviet Film Plan Seen as Help in Easing Tensions', *Los Angeles Times* (12 October 1966), A1.

ready for distribution, ‘Warners walked away.’⁸⁶ Tiomkin tried again. He acquired the English-language rights and created a new version, which premiered in the fall of 1971. The film was trimmed from 157 minutes to just over 90 minutes and used a prologue and voice-over narration read by Lawrence Harvey plus subtitles. In his many interviews Tiomkin reiterated his hopes that the film ‘will improve US-USSR relations and is sure it will establish the Soviet film industry as a major force.’⁸⁷ But even with all Tiomkin’s efforts, including the nomination by the Academy Awards committee for 1971 and support from the Minister of Culture, E.A. Furtseva, on her own trip to the United States (and Hollywood) in January 1972, the film was considered a foreign language entry and did not fulfil the dreams of its makers, either in the USSR or the US.⁸⁸

Conclusion

While the ‘Party line’ is a major feature of Soviet cinema, the USSR shared various concerns with other European cinemas vis-à-vis Hollywood and faced similar problems in developing its film industry, including the challenge of television and the requirements for blockbusters. European countries, especially France and Italy, were leading the way in co-productions not only for economic gain but also for their own interests in cultural diplomacy⁸⁹ and film was part of that effort. The interest in reinforcing European connections, seeking a common denominator in European art as compared to Hollywood plots, and forging some economic solidarity in the ongoing efforts at European integration are sufficiently important that they should be considered as part of the story of Cold War cultural diplomacy, European style.

In what way do these efforts represent a form of cultural diplomacy in the cultural contest writ large, that is, the East-West rivalry? In spite of well-publicised attempts to put together a Soviet-American co-production from 1960 onwards, the only one officially completed during the Cold War period was a version of Maeterlinck’s play, *The Blue Bird*, released in 1976. The *New York Times* critic cynically observed that ‘peace treaties and trade pacts are international agreements arrived at through compromise. Movies are not. *The Blue Bird*, the first (and possibly the last) American-Soviet motion picture co-production, isn’t good and it isn’t a dis-

86 Steve Toy, ‘Tiomkin Bullish On Producing Films With Bearish Russia’, *Variety* (20 December 1971), p. 3.

87 Mary Blume, ‘Tiomkin Goes Home for Film’, *Los Angeles Times* (14 December 1969), R 34.

88 For a more complete history of this film see Marsha Siefert, ‘Russische Leben, Sowjetische Filme: Die Filmographie, Tchaikovsky und der Kalte Krieg’, in Lars Karl (ed.), *Leinwand zwischen Tauwetter und Frost: Der osteuropäische Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm im Kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Metropol, 2007), p. 133-170.

89 On French efforts to use Europe as a means to export French culture abroad, see Anthony Haigh, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1974), p. 28.

grace. It's not much of anything.'⁹⁰ But that pronouncement perhaps misses the essence of cultural diplomacy, which is not necessarily the product but the process itself and the larger context in which any given film must be understood. In the realm of negotiation about individual films, archival evidence suggests that each scene was carefully scripted and styled, debated back and forth through endless revisions, and argued at the highest levels while aiming for a mass-market film with artistic resonance. Such discussions, even among well-intentioned film-makers at the level of filming and editing decisions, exhibit a kind of diplomacy that does involve cultural values and negotiation. The deal-making, the official visits, and the publicity about the process also chronicle frustrations and intersect with high politics. Co-productions, along with all the other foreign films exchanged, seen, debated and analysed, form part of a larger portrait of attempts at co-operation amid the crises of the Cold War decades. The process kept a line open, a possibility alive, even if it seemed that most of the time each country preferred its own image and version of the other.

90 Vincent Canby, 'This "Blue Bird" Has a Right to Sing the Blues', *New York Times* (16 May 1976), p. 77.