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**SOVIET CINEMA IN ITALY  
IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD (1950-1970)**

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## *Introduction*

The object of the present research is the historical material connected with the Soviet cinema events that had happened in Italy. The field of the research is an interdisciplinary one, uniting history and cinema: one of the aims was to collect and to match the political and cultural events that took place between Italy and the USSR. The material about the Soviet films arriving to Italy in the post-war period had not yet been gathered and studied neither in Italy, nor in Russia, though the topic both for historians and for cinema experts is of high importance. Italian cinema in the USSR and Russia has always been popular, among the researches and scholars too, it is enough just to look at the bibliography or the thesis's topics of the cinema institutions in Russia. While in Italy the situation is very different, there are few Soviet cinema experts in Italy even for today, and most of them usually were occupied with the Soviet cinema history in the USSR, not about its "export" to European countries. Besides, even in Italy, having all these documents and materials in different local archives, there does not exist today any work or research that could unite them in order to understand how much Italy was interested (or was not) in the Soviet cinema, in building relations with the Soviet filmmakers, etc.

Italy was chosen on purpose as a country that during the Soviet years had very special relations with the USSR. Having the largest number of Communist Party members in the Western Europe, Italy was a special cultural and political 'bridge' between West and East, it was a capitalist state with very strong communist activity inside the country. And Italy was also one of the first and few Occidental countries to start the cinematographic collaboration with the Soviet Union.

Italy for this kind of research was very representative country: being the leader by the number of members in the communist party in Europe in the post-war years, during World War II Italy was politically strongly against the USSR. So, it was taken as a unique example of an Occidental state with such radical changes in its policy and in its relations with the Soviet Union.

The first questions to inspire the current research work were: what films did arrive in Italy from the Soviet Union when the country was so closed (especially under the Stalin's rule) and when there was a double censorship (both Soviet and Italian)? Did Italian public have access to the Soviet films and what image of the USSR could be formed in Italy through the Soviet cinema?

The chronological period of interest of the current research (1950-1970s) was also chosen basing from the previous studies. Russian/Soviet avant-garde cinema is rather known and frequent topic among foreign cinema experts, in Italy as well, but among the post-war Soviet filmmakers only Andrei Tarkosvky and Sergei Parajanov were honoured to be studied in numerous monographs. This period is particularly interesting because of the important political changes in the USSR, and as it was straightly connected with the cultural life, the cinema was totally influenced by those changes. The 1950s began yet with the Stalin's rule, the country was much closed and had very few partners in the world, politically and culturally; there were few contacts with other countries' cultures. After World War II Stalin wanted to use and to reinforce the lead position of the USSR and establish the Soviet influence in as many countries as possible. The countries of Eastern Europe interested Stalin more, as the Western states already were under political and financial influence of the USA. That made Stalin's policy to consider Western Europe not as a partner, but more as a rival. That is why there were few contacts also in cultural sphere; there were even boycotts of some European cultural events (like Venice Film Festival was boycotted by the Soviets in the end of 1940s).

After Stalin's death there began a very particular period of the Khrushchev Thaw in the USSR, when the policy completely changed and turned 180 degrees, Stalin's cult was severely judged and his dictatorship was criticized. The authority in that period was very open towards the artists in order to be a real contrast to Stalin's rule. Everything that was prohibited by Stalin was now encouraged by Khrushchev, though, of course, there was no complete freedom: the Communist Party and its policy were still untouchable for the critics. The important fact for the cinema was that the films of Stalin's propaganda finally disappeared from the Soviet and international screen. Another important thing was the building of new

good relations with foreign partners, so it became possible for Europe to see ‘new’ Soviet cinema, free of Stalin’s cliché. And that gave the first success of the Soviet cinema abroad – the Soviet films began to participate in international film festivals, special Soviet cinema retrospectives appeared in France, Italy, England, etc. The changes in the cultural life of the Soviet Union were unalterable: even in the next decades of so called Brezhnev’s stagnation (Era of stagnation) it was already impossible to stop artists in their creative work – once they felt even a slight taste of freedom, they immediately reflected it in their works. The filmmakers during the Khrushchev Thaw were very often criticized, but their films were realized and screened. So, it was possible to read in the newspapers that this or that film was poor, but it was possible to watch it in the cinema. During Khrushchev era the number of cinema spectators in the USSR was the first in the world with more than 4 billion spectators a year<sup>1</sup>. After this period with the Brezhnev era many films were prohibited or during the preparation process (the film scripts could wait for years to be filmed), or after being already shot (some films did not arrive to the Soviet spectator or were screened in few cinemas in Moscow only, for example). These thirty years suffered significant changes in political and cultural life of the USSR, and that makes them interesting to study and to watch the Soviet cinema of the period to reflect those changes and to change together with the country.

Besides, that period was also full of changes in Europe, too. Italy and Germany after World War II suffered the most significant political changes with the collapse of the fascist regimes. Italy had to make a radical turn from fascism to building friendship with the communist Soviet Union, though it was possible due to the growing popularity of the Italian communist movement.

This is why the research is interdisciplinary between history and cinema studies. As it was very well studied and mentioned by Stefano Pisu<sup>2</sup> in his work, the

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<sup>1</sup> Kosinova M. *The Fall of Cinema Attendance in the Era of “Stagnation”. Causes and Consequences.*  
<http://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/padenie-kinoposetschaemosti-v-epohu-zastoya-prichiny-i-posledstviya>

<sup>2</sup> Pisu S. *L’Unione Sovietica alla Mostra Internazionale d’arte cinematografica di Venezia (1932-1953).* Università degli Studi di Cagliari, 2008. p.7

beginning of such studies was a merit of French historians Marc Ferro and Pierre Sorlin, “quali hanno avuto il merito di conferire a tale corrente, via via ingrossatasi, la patente accademica di scientificità.”<sup>3</sup> Pisu mentioned also that in Italy such studies appeared in the beginning of the 1980s after the influence of the French scholars. In Russia such kind of studies obviously appeared after the USSR’s collapse, Soviet cinema historians were studying cinema history apart from the general history. Naum Kleiman in 1990s participated in the cinema conferences with his studies about the cinema of totalitarianism – “Kino totalitarnoi epokhi” (*Cinema of the totalitarian era*). Valerij Fomin published his books “Kino i vlast: sovetskoe kino, 1965-1985 gody: dokumenty, svidetelstva, razmyshlenia” (*Cinema and Power: Soviet Cinema, 1965-1985: Documents, Testimonies, Reflections*) in 1996 and “Kinematograf ottepeli: dokumenty i svidetelstva” (*Cinema of Thaw: Documents and Testimonies*) in 1998.

And if Stefano Pisu in his work wrote that “abbiamo così colto inconsapevolmente l’appello di Gian Piero Brunetta di una decina di anni or sono, a studiare la Mostra del cinema di Venezia attraverso gli archivi, visti i pochi studi di natura storica a riguardo”<sup>4</sup>, the current research went further and mostly concentrated not on the festival history, but on all other events that made Soviet cinema closer to the Italian public. The Venice festival was more an event for cinema experts and very few spectators, while the program of Italian cinemas formed better the image of the Soviet cinema. Though even the presence of the Soviet films in Venice is not yet well studied in Russia, and current research took responsibility and found in Venice Festival archives all the Soviet pictures (including documentaries, short films, animated films, etc) that participated in the festival program in 1950-1970. No similar list has yet appeared in the Russian or Italian cinema studies.

Another thing was that often the events in the political life of the USSR were often the answer to the problems that current research tried to resolve: why there

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<sup>3</sup> Idem

<sup>4</sup> Idem, p.8

were no Soviet films in Italy in some periods, why Soviet cinema presence in Italy was so little, why collaboration started in certain years, etc.

One more reason to start this research work was also the lack of the information about the Soviet cinema in Italy (apart from the Venice Festival). In Russian archives there is information about Italian cinema in the USSR instead, so none of the scholars yet made similar research in Italian archives. The current work could be considered the first small step towards revealing the documents from Italian archives. The particular thing working in such archives in Italy was that they are not centralized, and each Italian region has its own libraries' and archives' catalogues that differs from the Russian system. In Russia the State Archive of the Russian Federation and the Russian State Library both situated in Moscow contain major collection of the documents and materials, even of the events that happened in other cities and regions. Besides, main Soviet cinema events, Italian delegation visits happened mostly in Moscow and Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg), that is why the work in Russian archives was concentrated only in the archives of these two cities.

The main Russian archives taken into consideration were:

- The State Archive of the Russian Federation – Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Rossijskoj Federacii, Gosarkhiv, or GARF;
- The Russian State Archive of Literature and Art - Rossijskij Gosudarstvennyj Archiv Literatury i Iskusstva, or RGALI;
- The Central State Archive of Saint Petersburg – Tsentralnyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga, or TSGA SPb;
- The Russian Centre of Conserving and Studying of the Documents of the Modern History – Rossijskij tsentr khraneniija i izuchenija dokumentov noveishei istorii, or RTSKHIDNI;
- Archive of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation – Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossijskoj Federatsii, or AVP RF.

Actually the documents directly quoted in the current research were taken from the latter two, and the main reason was that the Russian archives documented the

events that happened in Russia (USSR) while the research is occupied with the events connected with the Soviet cinema, but in Italy.

The archives studied in Italy were mainly situated in Bologna and nearby cities in Emilia-Romagna, the region with a rich communist past and a number of respective libraries and archives. The most useful for the research appeared to be:

- archive of the Fondazione Gramsci of Emilia-Romagna.

Its collection contained documents about the Association Italia-URSS, the activity of the local PCI, the archives of the periodicals like “L’Unità”, “Noi donne”, “Rassegna sovietica”, “Rassegna della stampa sovietica”, “Urss oggi”, “La cultura sovietica”, documents of the cinema festival in Porretta Terme and another materials devoted to the left-wing movement, contacts with the USSR and etc. Apart from the cinema sources and cultural activity of the Communist Party in Italy, Gramsci archives contained a large number of the historical information that the current research was basing on: the materials about the Cold War (in Italian and English languages), about the relations between the Italian communists and culture, about the political and cultural relations of the Italian and Soviet communists and also about the Italian-American political and cultural interations. Cineteca of Bologna had one of the best collections of the Soviet cinema periodicals “Cinema sovietico”, “Il film sovietico”, different editions of Sovexportfilm in English and French, besides, there were also periodicals in Russian dating 1920s and 1930s – “Iskusstvo kino” and “Sovetskii ekran”. Mentioned documents and materials were attentively studied for the current research, though Cineteca of Bologna has also the widest collection of the Soviet cinema history books and materials, the best one found in Italian libraries, containing also the works by Renzo Renzi, Italian filmmaker, cinema expert, critic and writer, whose name was given to Cineteca’s library. Cineteca of Bologna also had in its collection some of the official programs of the festivals and weeks of the Soviet cinema in Italy, though it is worth mentioning that Cineteca did not have all of them in possession and it was necessary to search for such kind of documents also in another archives of Italy.

Another cinema history and Italian cinema materials were studied at the Bologna University Department of Arts library, which was necessary for the research to know better the situation in Italy in 1950-1970s and to understand the place of the Soviet cinema in the country. Certain materials of the kind were found only in Imola in Emilia-Romagna region, that contained, for example, the monograph edited under the cure of Italsider “Momenti del cinema russo” (Moments of the Russian cinema).

Another important archives to study and to use for the research were situated in Rome, at the Centro sperimentale di cinematografia (Experimental film centre), especially its ‘fondo Massimo Mida Puccini’ and also its collection of the above mentioned periodicals dedicated to the Soviet cinema, but containing the issues that were lacked in Bologna. The Centre in Rome contained also the biggest collection of the cinema critical periodicals that were also studied for the Soviet films’ reviews and everything connected with the cinema and filmmakers from the USSR.

The third most important spot in Italy was Turin with its archives in the library Mario Gromo of the National Museum of Cinema. There were found the documents about the festivals and weeks of the Soviet cinema in Italy that were missing in Bologna and Rome. Besides, in Turin there were found other materials concerning the political situation in Italy and the relations with the USSR, some statistical information about the communists of the Piedmont, etc. Important work was found in Fondazione Luigi Einaudi about the image of the USSR in Italy after World War II<sup>5</sup> that helped a lot to understand what image of the Soviet Union had Italians had according to the mass media of the period.

One of the difficulties while working was often lack of correspondence between the dates in different archives and sources (the year of the foundation of the Association Italia-URSS, the dates of the Soviet film festivals, the dates when certain films were screened in Italy, etc). In such cases usually both versions had to be mentioned, though it created sometimes chronological misunderstanding,

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<sup>5</sup> Pipitone D. *L'immagine dell'URSS nell'Italia del secondo dopoguerra: le riviste di terza forza*. Tesi di laurea. Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia. Università degli studi di Torino. 2003-2004

but not of the serious character. It was also found out during the research that many Soviet films arrived with a long delay to Italy, like Tarkovsky's "Andrei Rublev" that was screened in Italy 9 years later after its release in the USSR, when already his next film "Mirror" was ready to be screened in Italy. Although the films that arrived to the Venice Film Festival were more up-to-date. The reasons for such different destinies of some Soviet films in Italy could hardly be explained, neither by political nor by any other motives. Another kind of difficulty in understanding the real situation and Italian image of the Soviet films was the fact that those films had different versions in the USSR and abroad. In most cases, or better to say even in every case, there was another kind of film screened – with different episodes cut or added, and even with different music sometimes. The duration of the films varied significantly, from two to twenty minutes sometimes. That could be explained by double censorship: in the USSR it was the Communist party to approve the films and certain episodes, in Italy it was the church and sometimes political authorities who saw Soviet propaganda in some of the cases. Generally speaking, the communist Soviet Union tried to show how well life in the USSR was and tried not to show the capitalistic world with its unproblematic life. Occidental versions of the Soviet films tried to minimize the exhibition of a perfect Soviet reality, besides, the eroticism in cinema had radically different levels and that influenced also what was shown to the spectators in different countries.

Another important part of the research work was studying the Italian press of different kind (both concentrated on cinema and the regular one) of the period. Italian mass media was very often the only source where certain events were mentioned and described.

Though there was some difficulty regarding the work with Italian press of that time: many sources were dependent on the political or religious institutions; that means the way they informed the readers was of a propaganda character. For example, "L'Unità" was often the only source to mention and to write about the Soviet cinema events in Italy, but it could not be fully relied on (if to ask for the objectivity) being the Italian Communist Party mouthpiece. Or "Segnalazioni

cinematografiche” that wrote reviews on Soviet films but was supervised by the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico. Nevertheless, those periodicals were studied and quoted in the current research as the only source of the information sometimes; besides, such connection with political and other interests of the press was a peculiarity of that period of 1950-1970s and was almost impossible to avoid.

Evidently, the main methodological approaches that current research was encompassed were comparative historical method, text-based method and problematic chronological method. Comparative historical approach should be listed as the number one method for most part of the research was concluded in studying historical facts and events concerning the Soviet cinema in Italy and then trying to create explanations. The sources collected were archival data and secondary sources situated in Italy in overwhelming majority. The text-based method means the work with texts in a qualitative manner in order to answer the research questions. Problematic chronological approach was necessary to trace in historical development the changes of the Soviet-Italian relations and the changes the Soviet cinema suffered internally.

Also there should be mentioned a quantitative research method widely used in social sciences (History and International relations in our case), and used here also via statistical techniques which objective was to develop and to prove the hypotheses based on historic and statistic data.

Initially the goals of the research were to find all possible information and the facts about the Soviet cinema presence in Italy, to study Italian press and reviews of the Soviet films, to find and analyze the documents concerning Italian-Soviet collaboration – generally speaking, to reveal the information that was still missing in Russian/Soviet cinema history and to gather the material that was separately conserved in different Italian archives. It could be said that the initial goals were achieved, and besides some new questions were added and resolved. For example, when the research was dealing with the Soviet presence at the Venice Film Festival, it faced a problem of a poor description in the previous sources of a real

number of the films that had arrived to Italy. Both Russian and Italian sources mentioned only winners and usually winners of the main awards, so actually it seemed that there were only few films presented to the Italian public. Studying the archives of the Festival, there came out a number of important animated films and documentaries that won awards in Venice; animated Soviet films were such a success in Venice that in 1969 there was organized a retrospective. Those important facts were hidden in the archives and had never been described even briefly.

The structure of the current research work depended on the mentioned above interdisciplinary character; its historical and cinematographic features had led to the necessity to start the work with the historical background. That is why the first chapter is wholly devoted to the political situation in Europe and the influence of the Cold War on the international relations with the USSR. Those relations with the Soviet Union of different European countries were mentioned to compare it with the Italian-Soviet relations studied more in detail in the second chapter. At the same time, the first chapter also had to mention the cinematographic relations of the USSR with certain countries, also because the other chapters were decided to dedicate only to the main argument – the presence of the Soviet cinema in Italy. That is why the first chapter had to be summarizing one and based on previous researches. The argument was not the new one (international relations of the USSR), but it was accompanied by the cinematographic context, and that had to lead to better understanding of a special Italian position, that in turn explained the choice of the country for the main topic of the present research work.

The second chapter is concentrated on the Soviet-Italian relations. At first, it was necessary to observe the political interaction between PCI in Italy and CPSU in the USSR. The policy of the both parties governed the cultural life of the countries and the collaboration (or not) with each other. The main organ to rule the situation was the cultural Association *Italia-URSS* launched in Italy under the PCI's patronage. Second part of the second chapter contains the information about the Association's activity gathered in different documents of the archives all over Italy. As *Italia-URSS* had several regional branches and the events organized in

every region differed from each other, there was made a work to unite all-Italian cultural events connected with the Soviet culture to understand the whole picture. From the general cultural events research then continues to deepen the topic and concentrate on cinematographic occasions devoted to the Soviet films in Italy. Third chapter talks about the previous studies of the Soviet cinema in Italy, where it becomes clear that apart from the general Soviet cinema history works in Italy there is a lack of any other kind of researches. The current research has only a few predecessors in Italy that have united history and cinema of both studied countries. Second part of the chapter contains the full list of the films made in Italian-Soviet co-production with the detailed history of each collaboration, statistic data, and etc. to describe fully the whole picture of the Soviet cinema presence in Italy. The fourth chapter explains how the Soviet films were distributed in Italy to form the general image of the kind of access of Italian public to the cinema that arrived from the Soviet Union. The chapter continues with the above mentioned archive work devoted to the Venice Film Festival and the Soviet films that arrived to Italy during the 1950-1970s. The full list let us see the variable amount of films, awards and quantity of the special sections devoted to the Soviet cinema that took place in Venice.

The last chapter has a summarizing character and tries to analyze chronologically the steps of the Soviet cinematography in Italy through the works of the most prominent film personalities that were related to Italian-Soviet relations somehow. Each of these persons represented also different political period in the Soviet history, and that is why for every decennary there was chosen the most representative character whose work was related to a certain period. The people chosen and described in the chapter had different experience, for example, Soviet film director Grigory Chukhrai built good relations with Italy more as a functionary when he received important posts after being internationally recognized as a film director. Italian screenwriter Tonino Guerra was the only Italian to live and work in the USSR in 1960s, Andrey Tarkovsky was a phenomenon that Italians often invited for collaborations and then even hosted when he decided to emigrate.

This chapter's conclusion has importance for the whole research work as it analyzes the Soviet cinema experience in Italy through all the years chosen for the study, making connection of all the events that happened through those years with the future of Italian-Soviet cinematographic relations.

The present research aimed also to uncover what kind of films arrived to Italy from the Soviet Union; partially they were obviously chosen by the Communist Party, and Italian communists supported such a choice. The main institutions that promoted and distributed Soviet cinema in Italy were under communists' control. The other alternative choice that the USSR had to do were the films awarded at the international film festivals and not only. Certain Soviet directors received international support without being appreciated in their own country – like Tarkovsky and Parajanov. Italian film producers did their best to get Tarkovsky's films at their festivals or to distribute them in Italian cinemas. Though these were just few examples, the major part of Soviet films arrived abroad through Sovexportfilm, the state-controlled institution. So, in Italy on the one hand there were pro-communist organizations that supported arriving of certain Soviet films, on the other hand there were film experts and film lovers that separated cinema and politics, and appreciated the artistic value of another kind of Soviet cinema.

The main part of the research work was based on the work with documents and archive materials, but the other resources used were materials of various kinds because of the interdisciplinary character of the research. So, apart from the documents regarding the Soviet film festivals in Italy and the PCI activity connected with the USSR partnership, there were some basic works used about the history of the Cold War and international relations during the period, about the relations between the political authorities and culture, especially in the Soviet Union where cinema was only one of the methods of ideological mechanism.

## *Chapter One*

### **The USSR and Europe after World War II**

#### **1.1 Foreign policy of the USSR and main European partners: Cold War**

World War II made significant changes in the foreign policy of the USSR and in the political situation in Europe. USSR after the War was considered one of the main and influential political powers in the world, its only rival being the USA, which had seen substantial economic growth during the war years and had not suffered such a last scale loss of life. Instead of becoming partners as was rather logical after the War, these two states began to grow rivalry instead which led to the Cold War. The USSR and the USA started to 'divide' Europe politically, creating different alliances and blocs. The Soviet Union received major authority in the Eastern European countries with the help of military presence (that was a guarantee of security after the War) and financial aid, too. The USA had more influence in Western Europe, especially because of being a creditor of a number of European countries (the UK, France , etc.). Lend-Lease programs brought significant amounts of money to the USA and raised its economy during War World II, as it allowed American goods to be sold in the European markets, and made America the main creditor.

The financial division of Europe increased even more after the appearance of the Marshall Plan and the Molotov Plan (this term does not exist in Russian sources). The Marshall Plan provided about 13 billion dollars in a 4-year period, and 2/3 of the goods bought with that money were of American origin. So, the USA entirely controlled the European market in the post-war years, also investing into the economies of different European countries. The counties that received money from the USA under the Marshall Plan were: Austria, Belgium, Great Britain, Greece, Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway,

Portugal, Turkey, France, Switzerland, Sweden, then also West Germany (in 1949) and the Free Territory of Trieste. The only Western European country that did not participate in the Marshall Plan was Spain. The so-called Molotov Plan did not allow the Soviet Union's allies to accept USA financial aid. The countries under Soviet influence were: Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. In fact, the term 'Molotov Plan' does not exist in Russian, because Molotov's rejection of the Marshall Plan was not yet an economic system, but in 1949 Comecon – The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance – was launched, with the purpose of preventing Soviet allies from moving towards the USA. That kind of division of Europe was a great difficulty for the Soviet economy, as it led to a significant reduction in foreign trade with Western countries, exemplified by the fact the USSR's turnover with Europe fell by 35 %.

Due to those financial reasons Europe was divided by the sphere of influence between the USSR and the USA. The division of Germany was also inevitable.

Only very recently has the idea appeared in Western historiography that a possibility did exist for a non-confrontational, compromise solution of the German question, on the basis of preserving the unity of the German state. I have in mind primarily the monograph by the West German historian Wilfried Loth, *Stalins ungeliebtes Kind*, in which the author shows, convincingly it seems to me, that, for the Soviet leadership, the creation of the GDR was not the optimal, preferred way to solve the German question, that it reverted to this only after all alternatives had been eliminated.<sup>6</sup>

This confrontation began even at the end of World War II, after 1943 when it was already obvious which parties held the power, although it is often thought that it started with appearance of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, the year when the Cold War officially commenced.

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<sup>6</sup> Filitov A. *Problems of Post-War Construction in Soviet Foreign Policy Conceptions during World War II* / Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.3

## **Cold War**

Cold War Studies encompasses an incredibly broad range of academic investigation. Harvard University in 1999, for example, even launched 'The Journal of Cold War Studies' in order to provide a platform to further study this complex historical question. The present research work does not aim to go profoundly into the political studies, but it is necessary to mention the main historical points that made the international political picture of the period. This is mainly because culture and cinema, in particular, depended heavily on the political power of the countries in this period. Besides, the studies devoted to the Cold War began only in the 1990s after the USSR's collapse, so can still be considered in their infancy.

It is important to mark out the Cold War as the main leading idea of the international political process in post-war Europe. It covered also the European foreign policy of all the period of the current research. The view on this problem varies a lot between the USA, Russia and Europe. Generally speaking, Western countries considered the USSR as a new aggressor that wanted to bring its power in Europe, or at least in the blocks that were controlled by the Soviets. In the USSR, instead, there was an opinion that the USA wanted to divide Europe and interfered in other countries' policies.

On the one hand, Stalin believed the world to be divided into a Socialist and a capitalist camp in continuous struggle with each other. Prisoner of their ideology, Stalin and Molotov always based the Soviet foreign policy on the assumption of the inevitability of a future war with the capitalist world. [...] On the other hand, for the immediate post-war years Stalin counted on a period of peace and collaboration with the Western Powers in order to gain time and recover from the destruction caused by war. To this end, Stalin's post-war policy towards Europe would need to respect the spheres of influence assigned to each member of victorious Alliance. As a result, Stalinist foreign policy in the aftermath of World War II tried to balance the benefits of continued co-operation with Western Allies with

the imperative of consolidating the newly acquired sphere of influence and preparing ground for its future expansion.<sup>7</sup>

The official beginning of the Cold War is traditionally connected with the Truman Doctrine in 1947, but actually the world was already divided beforehand. Already during World War II world power was split between the Eastern and Western fronts. And before Truman it was Churchill who in 1946 pronounced his famous “Iron curtain speech” (though he was not a Prime Minister at the moment of speech). Russian historians consider this speech as the beginning of the Cold War<sup>8</sup>, because Churchill inconspicuously branded the USSR as an enemy:

Now I come to the second danger of these two marauders which threatens the cottage, the home, and the ordinary people—namely, tyranny. We cannot be blind to the fact that the liberties enjoyed by individual citizens throughout the British Empire are not valid in a considerable number of countries, some of which are very powerful.<sup>9</sup>

The same year the Soviet Union founded its “Cominform” (Communist Information Bureau) to strengthen and consolidate the international communist movement, and to coordinate the communist parties in several countries: U.S.S.R., Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, France, and Italy. The “Cominform” was located in Belgrade initially and then moved to Bucharest and launched its own newspaper in different languages. French and Italian communist received a task from “Cominform” to start anti-Marshall plan and anti-Truman doctrine campaigns in their countries. “Cominform” lasted until 1956 and finished its work with the De-Stalinization process in the USSR.

In 1948 there was a very important Czechoslovak coup d'état when the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia took control over the government, and this spurred the Western countries into effecting the Marshall Plan as soon as possible.

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<sup>7</sup> Aga-Rossi E. and Zaslavsky V. *The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party, 1944-8*/ Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.161

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace>

<sup>9</sup> Idem

One of the first important crises in the Cold War was the Berlin Blockade that lasted from 24 June 1948 till 12 May 1949. The USSR blocked the railway road and canal access to Western Berlin, preventing the transport of food, materials and supplies. It was made in order to protest against the money reform and against the whole economic policy of the Western states in Western Berlin. Until 1952, Stalin proposed not to separate Germany and not to create two separate governments. The Blockade had the opposite effect, as the Western countries started to airlift help to Western Berlin and became more and more opposed to Soviet policy.

Next year, in the April of 1949, NATO was founded and the Cold War got its official kind of military 'support'. The first real war where the two powers met was the Korean War in 1950.

After Stalin's death in 1953, the situation changed marginally and international relations calmed. Already in 1954 the Geneva Accords were signed, de-Stalinization process started in the USSR and etc. The Khrushchev Thaw, a relaxation in the Soviet Union's internal and external relations, characterized the period up until the early 1960s. In the 1960s there was a fiercely-contested space and arms race, as well as the Berlin Crisis and Cuban Missile Crisis; and then the most important Prague Spring occurred, which further divided the world and even made some Soviet allies turn away from that policy.

Generally speaking, these events influenced the period under interest and formed the international political picture of the world. Many events happened in the post-war period, many states were building relations with each other from scratch, as many states had significantly changed their borders and policies. And obviously, not everything was unambiguous, especially in Italy. Fortunately, cultural life at some point (in the USSR it was during The Khrushchev Thaw) started its own separate way, under the government, but gradually developed independently. Britain, for example, in the 1950s despite of all the political circumstances of the Cold War, launched several official organizations (mentioned below) devoted to building friendship with the Soviet artists, and so on.

So, as already stated, not everything was so unambiguous in the post-war political situation. Already in the middle of the 1940s in Western Europe, mainly due to the war success of the USSR, communism was growing in popularity; the number of communist parties' members grew six times from 1939 to 1946 (in Western European countries). For example, in the 1936 French elections to the National Assemble, the PCF (French Communist Party) received 1, 502, 404 votes, whilst in that of November of 1946, they received 5, 430, 593. This only led to increased tensions between the USA and the USSR, and meant that the Soviet Union had to foster very particular relations with each Western European country.

Two countries will presently be taken into consideration in comparison to Italy, in order to provide a better understanding of the situation in Western Europe; France with a strong communist movement and Britain that was far away from being called communist. Nevertheless, these two countries were building their own relations with the USSR and with Soviet culture.

## **1.2 France in the Cold War and Franco-Soviet cultural relations**

France was the country that found itself between two sides. During World War II, when Germans attacked the Soviet Union, de Gaulle immediately supported the Russians in his speech. The year after, in 1942, he also declared that alliance between Russian and France was “a necessity which we see reappearing at every turn of history”.<sup>10</sup>

De Gaulle's policy towards the USSR during World War II has been the subject of various explanations and appraisals. The most commonly encountered is what might be called 'realism'. According to this version, the General considered that Eternal Russia was more important than the Soviet regime, which was either a mere historical avatar or, at most, an instrument serving Russia's permanent imperial ambitions. As a result, he is supposed to have thought that Moscow's support was indispensable to France during the war and also looking forward to the post-war period,

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<sup>10</sup> Moltchanov, N. *Le Général de Gaulle*. Progress, Moscow, 1988. P.143

both against Germany and against the Anglo-Saxons. In this interpretation, de Gaulle had a very classical idea of the balance of power in Europe which took no account of the specific revolutionary element embodied by the USSR, or else he regarded this as nothing more than a means to achieve Russia's traditional aims.

It is to be observed, however, that a witness who knew the USSR well and who had the opportunity to follow closely the General's policy towards that country during the war, and particularly in 1944, namely, Jean Laloy, saw the matter as much more complex and subtle, and I regard his view as being nearer the truth. While he agrees that de Gaulle wanted to make use of the USSR as a 'counterweight', in a classical French policy of playing-off the great powers against each other, he also saw a 'duality' in the General's outlook: 'with his right eye de Gaulle saw Russia, but with his left he saw the international Communist movement'.<sup>11</sup>

During the war it appeared that Stalin and de Gaulle had begun a serious diplomatic exchange, but soon relations started to calm down. There were several events that led to this: the Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Moscow in 1942 (where the European Advisory Commission suggested that France should not be a member), then the following two memoranda by Dejean, Soviet policy for the post-war time that was far from the dealings with the London Polish Government, etc. In 1944 France already associated itself with the Western block and the Provisional Government of the French Republic was continuously insisting on signing a Franco-Soviet treaty. The signing of this treaty happened in Moscow on 10 December of 1944 with Molotov and Bidault, and de Gaulle also arrived in Moscow in order to show his support. The treaty included the collaboration in the fight against Germany, and it was forbidden to lead separate negotiations with Hitler's government and to make agreements, etc; in a post-war period both countries were obliged to fight against new possible threats with Germany and in case one of the countries was attacked – the other would

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<sup>11</sup> Soutou, G.H. *General de Gaulle and the Soviet Union, 1943-5: Ideology or European Equilibrium*/ Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.310

immediately help; and the main point was that the USSR and France committed themselves not to enter into any coalitions that put them on opposing sides. This latter point was soon broken, and the treaty that was signed for twenty years was abolished in 1955 by the Soviet Union. The first reason was France's NATO membership established in 1949, and the second was the Bonn-Paris convention signed in 1952.

So, it was clear that in the post-war period that the ruling class in France began to be hostile towards the USSR. In that period the foreign policy of France was following the USA line: this is evident with the division of Germany, for example, or the membership of NATO in 1949. France was among the first members of NATO that aimed to counteract Soviet expansion. The country was receiving significant help from the USA after World War II for reconstruction: it was both financial and "real" help. In the period between 1948-1958 France received approximately 12 billion dollars, and the main receivers were automobile companies, as well as metallurgical and chemical industries that needed to import new equipment. The "Marshal plan" and governmental policy helped France to recover in a very short time. Already in 1947 the country's production returned to the pre-war levels. The central role of American capital in that success made France limited in its freedom, even its economic freedom. American monopolies were buying French raw materials and French companies, and opening branches of their own companies in France. Richard F. Kuisel from The State University of New York at Stony Brook commented on France's Americanization during that period by writing:

By "Americanization" I mean the coming of consumer society and mass culture mediated by America. Once I have developed these themes by using the examples of Coca-Cola and the productivity drive I shall skip to the post-Cold War era and offer some observations on the state of the question of Americanization as seen from a contemporary vantage point.

The three themes, or theses, are: first the Cold War politicized and handicapped the process of Americanization. That is, the products and techniques that the U.S. exported across the Atlantic during the 1950s

became part of the struggle between communism and anti-communism and ideological partisanship dampened French receptivity. Second, Americanization occurred and French uniqueness was diluted. Nevertheless, “Frenchness” survived because much of the cross-Atlantic borrowing was transformed or simply added to the Gallic repertoire without supplanting it. American mass culture, for example, despite Gallic resistance especially from elites, has come to co-exist in France along side other cultural forms, e.g. elite or folk culture, as part of a process that has been called global “semi-Americanization”. And third, Americanization in France has been an important issue, and recently has become even more so, because it raises basic questions about the future of France and French identity. My principal argument is the spread of American mass culture has been controversial in France – arguably more so than anywhere in Western Europe because the debate about Americanization is a discussion among the French themselves about modernity, independence and, increasingly, about national identity.<sup>12</sup>

With this Americanization there grew another, contradictory movement in France and in Europe generally: it was Western European Communism. The Communist Party of France (PCF) was more concerned about foreign relations than, for example, The Communist Party of Italy (PCI). Alessandro Brogi explained it by “the centrality of France in international developments – including Vietnam, Algeria, the German question, the Gaullist approach to NATO – and in part because of the party’s intensive debate and soul-searching regarding French national identity”.<sup>13</sup> France had to accept and to take into consideration the French communist movement, especially when economic questions had to be solved. Besides, French and Italian communists had built rather strong friendship since Second World War. Both communist parties were somehow influenced by the Soviet Union, and their leaders Togliatti and Thorez, had support in the USSR.

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<sup>12</sup> Kuisel R. *France and "Semi-Americanization": the Cold War and Beyond/ Conference: Beyond the Cold War: The United States and the Renewal of Europe. Session Six. Florence/Bologna, 26-29 October 1994. P. 1-2*

<sup>13</sup> Brogi, A. *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, 2011.p.10

The French Communists became more subordinate to the Soviet Union than the Italians because of ideological intransigence and national identity, according to Brogi. Thorez had more control in France than Togliatti in Italy, despite the larger number of party members. It may also be due to the fact that the French communists did not have such a strong competition for popularity as the Italians did with the Catholic Church. Sometimes French communists even exaggerated their affinity with the Soviet Union. For example, when in 1942 the communist newspaper "L'Humanité" wrote: "the Soviet Union was France even before France would become the Soviet Union", or when Thorez declared that "everyone has two fatherlands, France and the Soviet Union".<sup>14</sup>

French communists, as well as Italian ones, had a very special position in international politics. They existed between two fronts, but were rather numerous in their countries.

The coherence, effectiveness, and cunning French and Italian communist anti-Americanism can also be assessed against that of the Soviet Union. Power made a difference. The Soviet Union could at crucial junctures compromise with the United States, thanks to the recognition it received as a superpower. For much of their Cold War experience, the French and Italian Communist Parties were powerless – especially on the world stage. Their anti-Americanism consequently often surpassed that of the Soviets in thoroughness, if not consistency. The two parties, however, enjoyed another source of recognition and empowerment: the electorate. Thanks to the relative connection between communist voters and their leaders, the anti-Americanism of the party apparatus did not appear as orchestrated as it was in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the PCI and PCF could work as magnets for all sorts of discontent regarding the U.S. presence and American policies: for example, in the early 1950s, the Stockholm Peace Appeal, which was coordinated from Moscow, gathered far more consensus in France and Italy than the size of the two parties would indicate. Whenever we consider the alacrity with which French and Italian

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<sup>14</sup> Brogi, A. *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, 2011.p.22-23

Communists stepped in line with Moscow, we must also take into account their ability to adapt their Cold War allegiance to national realities. This was especially true in their resistance to American influence.<sup>15</sup>

The attempts of the French and Italian communists to launch anti-Marshall campaigns were not successful; instead, they showed all the mistakes and contradictions that Western communists had. America's reputation improved significantly after it gave financial aid to Europe, and its economic situation sharply contrasted with that of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The French and Italian Communists privileged cultural resistance because they recognized that their leverage was strongest on those issues. By the late 1940s, however, both the Communists and Americans had come to realize that culture was the most elusive element in their confrontation.<sup>16</sup>

Already by 1944-1946 in several Western European countries, several Associations aimed at building cultural relations with the USSR had been founded, seeking to bring together scientists and artists from the opposing sides. France and Italy were the first countries where these associations, controlled and supported by the communist parties, were founded.

In France, the Association "France-USSR" ('France-URSS' in French) was launched in 1944 and immediately issued a magazine that encouraged people to sign up. Before World War II, in 1933, there existed another organization of the kind called "Association of friends of the Soviet Union" headed by French writer and communist Henri Barbusse.

"France-USSR" organized voyages to the USSR of regular tourists and professionals, and also hosted and managed the visits of Soviet tourists and delegations. The Association also took an active part in the process of creating twin cities between France and the USSR, which totaled about sixty cases. In France the Association promoted Russian culture and Russian language,

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<sup>15</sup> Brogi, A. *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, 2011.p.8-9

<sup>16</sup> Idem, p. 157

launching language courses in different cities. And especially Russian culture was promoted through concerts, exhibitions, and, of course, Soviet films.

In 1944 in Moscow Franco-Soviet treaty of mutual collaboration in cinema was signed, and it made Soviet films appear in France again after a five-year gap. In the late 1930s, cinematic relations between the two countries had already been established.

At the end of the tense international situation at the end of the 1930s, France considered the USSR as its ally and invited the Soviet artists to the first Cannes Film Festival in 1939. The Soviet filmmakers accepted the invitation and proposed their works for the festival's jury team. Three Soviet films were selected for the competition: *Lenin in 1918* (1939) by Mikhail Romm, *Professor Mamlock* (1938) by Herbert Rappaport and Adolf Minkin. However, on 23 August 1939 the treaty of nonaggression was signed in Moscow between the USSR and Germany and a few days after the War broke out, therefore the festival was canceled. The Second World War broke off all Franco-Soviet cinematographic relations. Films produced in the USSR have completely disappeared from French cinemas for 5 years<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Au fond de la situation tendue à l'international vers la fin des années 1930, la France considérait l'URSS comme son allié et a invité des artistes soviétiques au premier Festival cinématographique de Cannes en 1939. Les cinéastes soviétiques ont accepté l'invitation et ont proposé leur représentant pour l'équipe de jury du festival. Trois films soviétiques ont été sélectionnés pour la compétition : *Lénine en 1918* ( 1939 ) de Mikhaïl Romm, *Professeur Mamlock* ( 1938 ) d'Herbert Rappaport et Adolf Minkin. Cependant, le 23 août 1939 le traité de non-agression a été signé à Moscou entre l'URSS et l'Allemagne et quelques jours après la Guerre a éclaté, par conséquent, le festival a été annulé. La Seconde Guerre Mondiale a rompu toutes les relations cinématographiques franco-soviétiques. Les films produits en URSS ont complètement disparus des salles françaises pour 5 années.

Leyda, J. *Kino: histoire du cinéma russe et soviétique*, Lausanne, Éditions l'Age d'homme, 1976, p. 47

Thought Leyda mentioned three films selected for the 1939's edition of the festival, another cinema expert Olivier Loubes mention also "Tractor-Drivers" by Ivan Pyryev.<sup>18</sup>

So, after a five-year interlude, Soviet cinema returned to France in 1944, and the first film to be screened was Marc Donskoi's "Rainbow". Cinema works produced in the USSR began to reappear also through French cinema clubs, and among such films there were "Stalingrad" by Leonid Varlamov and "Zoya" by Lev Arnshtam.

On 22 June 1945 "We Will Come Back" ("Sekretar' raykoma" in Russian) by Ivan Pyriev was screened in French cinemas, gathering 1.4 million<sup>19</sup> viewers. The Soviet films that appeared and reappeared in French cinemas after World War II proposed to French spectators a completely new point of view on the War, that of the winning country, of the Eastern front. Due to such films as "Berlin" by Yuli Raizman, "Seven Brave Men" ("Semero smelykh") by Sergei Gerasimov and "The Man with the Gun" ("Chelovek s ruzh'iom") by Sergei Yutkevich, French spectators learnt for the first time about events that had occurred in the USSR during World War II.

From November of 1945 till May of 1947 communists were the members of the government. And that had to influence the situation in cinema – distributors used the opportunity to get French spectator to know the latest Soviet cinema production. The Association "France-URSS" in 1946 published even a special issue devoted to the Soviet cinema. The same time there happened a real first Cannes Film Festival where the delegation arrived headed by Mikhail Kalatozov and consisted of Yutkevich, Vodyanitskaja, the main character in Arnshtam's "Zoya" screened in the main programme, Ermiler, Ladynina. Gerasimov was a member of the jury. [...]

On the I Cannes Film Festival the Soviet Union took eight awards, France

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<sup>18</sup> Loubes, O. *Cannes 1939, le festival qui n'a pas eu lieu*, Armand Colin, Paris. 2016. P.6

<sup>19</sup> Zakrevskaya, A. *Russkie vo Frantsii*. *Iskusstvo Kino*. N.7, July 2013.

<http://kinoart.ru/archive/2013/07/russkie-vo-frantsii>

– five, the USA and Czechoslovakia – three each. However, already since 1947 the Soviet films gradually disappeared from the French screen. And if in 1945 there were 8 % of the Soviet films in distribution, in 1946 it were 3% and in 1947 – 1,5%. And the problem was not the censorship: the production in the Soviet Union was not intense, there were few films produced.<sup>20</sup>

Another important agreement was signed in June 1955, dealing with film Weeks to take place both in France and the USSR. The first such Week of French cinema was held in the Soviet Union (in Moscow and Leningrad) and hosted Gérard Philipe, Dany Robin and Nicole Courcel who presented the films during two weeks in both cities. Two months later it was the Soviet delegation that came to France and was headed by Mikhail Kalatozov. Among the films screened during that Week of the Soviet Cinema were: “Romeo and Juliet” by Lev Arnshtam, “Life Lesson” (“Urok zhizni”) by Yuri Raizman, “The Grasshopper” (“Poprygunya”) by Samson Samsonov, “Unfinished Story” (“Neokonchennaya povest”) by Fridrikh Ermler.

Numerous weeks of Franco-Soviet cinema and the participation of Soviet films in the competition at the Cannes Film Festival contributed to the emergence of a Franco-Soviet cinematographic co-production.

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<sup>20</sup> С ноября 1945-го до мая 1947-го коммунисты являются и членами правительства. Это не может не сказаться и на ситуации в кино — прокатчики используют возможность познакомить французского зрителя с новейшей советской кинопродукцией. Ассоциация Франция — СССР в 1946-м выпустила даже специальное издание, посвященное советскому кино. Тогда же состоялся настоящий I Каннский фестиваль, куда приезжает делегация во главе с Михаилом Калатозовым, в которую входят Юткевич, Водяницкая, исполнительница главной роли в фильме Арнштама «Зоя», показанном в конкурсной программе, Эрмлер, Ладынина. Герасимов — член жюри. [...]

На I Каннском кинофестивале Советский Союз взял восемь призов, Франция — пять, США и Чехословакия — по три. Однако уже с 1947 года советские фильмы потихонечку исчезают с наших экранов. Если их доля в прокате в 1945 году составляла 8 процентов, то в 1946-м — всего 3, а в 1947-м — 1,5. И дело здесь не только в цензуре: производство в Советском Союзе было недостаточно мощным, выпускалось очень мало картин.

Zakrevskaya, A. *Russkie vo Frantsii*. *Iskusstvo Kino*. N.7, July 2013.  
<http://kinoart.ru/archive/2013/07/russkie-vo-frantsii>.

In 1959, the first Franco-Soviet co-production was launched with the film “Twenty Thousand Leagues Across the Land” directed by a communist director Marcelle Pagliero. Franco-Soviet co-production was booming until 1967.<sup>21</sup>

It is also interesting to mention the fact that the iconic Soviet film “Battleship Potemkin” by Sergei Eisenstein was screened in Paris in November of 1926, and such figures as Paul Éluard and Louis Aragon attended the performance. But immediately after the screening the film was prohibited by the French authorities and came back to the spectators in France only in the March of 1953.

### **1.3 Britain in the Cold War and British-Soviet cultural collaboration**

Relations between the USSR and Britain were also very special, because during World War II they were close allies in the fight against Nazi Germany. Though before the War the situation was quite the opposite, mainly because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression Pact in 1939, the annexation of the Baltic States, the Soviet occupation of Eastern Poland and even the supply of raw materials to Nazi Germany. Even earlier during the 1920s Churchill severely criticized Communism saying that it is “a pestilence more destructive of life than the Black Death or the Spotted Typhus”.<sup>22</sup> The German invasion of the USSR made Churchill definitely support the Soviet Union and offer any kind of help

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<sup>21</sup> De multiples semaines de cinéma franco-soviétiques et la participation des films soviétiques dans les compétitions du Festival de Cannes ont contribué à l’apparition d’une coproduction cinématographique franco-soviétique. En 1959, la première coproduction franco-soviétique a été lancée avec le film *Vingt Mille Lieues Sur La Terre* réalisé par un metteur en scène communiste Marcelle Pagliero. La coproduction franco-soviétique a été en plein essor jusqu’à 1967. Stefanskaya, A. *La diffusion du cinéma russe en France*. Master degree thesis. Université d’Avignon et des pays de Vaucluse. Master 1 – Stratégies du Développement Culturel Mention Publics de la Culture et Communication. 2014-2015. P.22

<sup>22</sup> Edmonds, R. *Churchill and Stalin*/ Blake, R., Louis, W.R. (eds). *Churchill: A Major New Assessment of his Life in Peace and War*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1993. P.311

Britain could offer to Russian people, as was said in his famous broadcast speech.<sup>23</sup>

Between 1941 and 1944 there were two main issues between Britain and the Soviet Union: the ‘second front’ and post-war Russian objectives in Europe. I shall say very little about the first because I believe it was more significant in relation to Russian perceptions of Britain than vice-versa. There is certainly no evidence that the British deliberately delayed the opening of the ‘second front’ in order to bleed the Soviet Union white, and the principal consequence of continual Russian pressure upon Britain’s perception of the Soviet Union was to heighten that feeling of exasperation and annoyance to which reference has already been made. Post-war Russian objectives in Europe were much more influential in moulding British perceptions of the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup>

After the War Britain was almost on the verge of bankruptcy, which was only avoided by the signing of the Anglo-American Loan Agreement in July 1946. John Maynard Keynes, a British economist, was a main negotiator on the British side and agreed with the American partners the sum of 3.75 billion dollars. The last instalment for this credit was made by Great Britain in 2006. This fact had rather serious consequences as the countries that were previously under the British Empire influence now depended on American capital, and there began the Empire’s decline. And though the official term “Cold War” often refers to the conflict between the USA and the USSR, and usually considered to start in 1947 after ‘Truman’s doctrine’, there are some facts that made Britain involved, too.

Geoffrey Warner in this work about British and Soviet relations quoted historian Zametica J. who marked out a single date when the Cold War began between

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<sup>23</sup> “Alliance with Russia” speech, June 22, 1941, London.

<https://www.winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/germany-invades-russia-2>

<sup>24</sup> Warner, G. *From ‘Ally’ to Enemy: Britain’s Relations with the Soviet Union, 1941-8* / Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.295

these two states – 2 April of 1946.<sup>25</sup> It was a day when Christopher Warner, an undersecretary of the Foreign Office Northern Department, produced a memorandum under the title “The Soviet Campaign against This Country and Our Response to It”. And the same day the Foreign Office Russian Committee held the first meeting where Warner “said that the Soviet Union had adopted an aggressive policy toward the West that was based on a mixture of Communism and nationalism.”<sup>26</sup> Warner saw a danger directly for Great Britain in the growing influence of the Soviet Union in Europe, especially in Germany that was divided into sectors after the War. The sector controlled by the USSR was very separated from the others, while there was no idea to separate Germany initially. Warner started a so-called ‘defensive-offensive’ campaign against the USSR. Another British preoccupation was Russian pressure in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. These facts could have been the forerunners of the ‘Truman doctrine’ in 1947 that was devoted to the problem in Germany. So, it was really the passage from allies to enemies between the Soviet Union and Britain.

Public opinion was completely behind the Government. A poll in August-September 1948, for example, showed that no less than 91 per cent of Britons believed that the Soviet Union wanted to dominate the world, compared with only 38 per cent of Italians and 30 per cent of French people. In so far as these developments marked the abandonment of any hope of an accommodation with the Russians together with the determination to mobilize the ‘free world’ against the threat of Communist

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<sup>25</sup> Warner, G. *From ‘Ally’ to Enemy: Britain’s Relations with the Soviet Union, 1941-8* / Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.301

<sup>26</sup> Neville, P. *Historical Dictionary of British Foreign Policy*. The Scarecrow Press, Plymouth. 2013. p.315

<https://books.google.it/books?id=FbeN7dBFtGwC&pg=PA315&lpg=PA315&dq=christopher+warner+british+foreign+office&source=bl&ots=9cCg8nVGwb&sig=yMf0aMnMfusGB3-aD0CuVFvyhws&hl=ru&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiSo--nmPLTAhXC1xoKHdT2B0gQ6AEILjAC#v=onepage&q=christopher%20warner%20british%20foreign%20office&f=false>

aggression and subversion, they may be said to mark the British Government's declaration of the Cold War.<sup>27</sup>

At the same time, it is necessary to mention that there existed the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) founded in 1920, but it was not as numerous in comparison to the Italian or French parties (that counted 1.7 million and 800,000 members, respectively). Its numbers peaked during 1943, reaching 60,000. The Party tried several times to affiliate with the Labour Party, but all of the attempts were unsuccessful – in 1935, 1943 and 1946.

With Stalin's death everything changed for the USSR in its foreign policy, and Britain's relations changed, too. Churchill, who was back in power in 1951, started to promote a dialogue with the Kremlin's new leaders.

First of all it should be noticed that Britain's Soviet policy in the aftermath of Stalin's death was marked by a series of inconsistencies and misunderstandings: many experienced decision-makers appeared unable either to realize the real meaning of the events which took place in Moscow or to forecast developments in the Soviet Union; the effectiveness of London's policy was seriously impaired by the deep contrasts between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office; Churchill seemed to be unable to work out a coherent policy towards the Soviet Union and his ambitious goals often bordered on some sort of senile mania. In addition, the object of the proposed conversations with the new Soviet leaders was always very vague and it was impossible to tackle the most difficult international issues, such as Korea, Indo-China, Germany and disarmament, without taking into consideration the opinions of the other major Western powers.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the rather cold political relations, an interest between the two cultures was gradually growing. People in Britain and the Soviet Union were

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<sup>27</sup> Warner, G. *From 'Ally' to Enemy: Britain's Relations with the Soviet Union, 1941-8* / Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.306

<sup>28</sup> Varsori, A. *Britain and the Death of Stalin* / Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.349

very willing to keep in touch with each other, and from the 1950s, after Stalin's death, a strong movement began. The most notable and important organization that influenced this British-Soviet 'warming' was "Pushkin House" founded in London in 1954. Established by Maria Kullman at Ladbroke Grove, 54 in Notting Hill, "Pushkin House" (also called "Pushkin Club") was initially a meeting place for Russian émigré. The activity grew very fast, and the Club organized concerts, lectures and meetings for those who were interested in Russian culture. Pushkin House was the oldest independent Russian culture centre in Britain, and because of this it did not have pro-Soviet propaganda, which distinguished it from other similar organizations (as listed below). Among the members there were not only émigré from the Russian Empire that had arrived in London before the birth of the USSR, but also Russian language and literature teachers. In 1960 the Club was already eager to organize a bus trip for British citizens to the Soviet Union in collaboration with "Progressive Tours" and Intourist. That trip was later described in "The Times"<sup>29</sup> and was a rather ambitious journey: the bus route included Rotterdam-Berlin-Warsaw-Minsk-Moscow-Novgorod-Leningrad-Kalinin(Tver'), and the travelers stayed in tents. The main idea of the trip was 'to find Pushkin', meaning to discover the real Russia. The majority of participants were British intellectuals – many translators and professors of Russian language, and there was even a priest, John Innes. Pushkin House exists nowadays and still deals with promoting Russian culture in Britain, organizing exhibitions, concerts and lectures.

Among other organizations in Britain that appeared due to the growing interest toward the Soviet Union in British society was the Association "Great Britain – USSR". Founded in 1959 in order to develop contact between the two countries, it was headed by Lord Attlee. The Association had direct contact with British politicians and had a pro-British character, though its main activity was organizing different cultural British-Soviet events. The main financial support the Association received was from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the same time,

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<sup>29</sup> Lipkin, A. *Sovetsko-britanskie intellektualnye i kulturnye kontakty v period "kulturnoi razryadki": konets 1950-kh – nachalo 1960-kh gg.* / Istorija, tom 10, N. 10 (43), 25.12.2015 <https://history.jes.su/s207987840001328-9-1>

it is interesting to mention that the same Associations in France and Italy were founded much earlier, in the middle of 1940s, immediately after World War II, while in Britain it was born later.

Two other organizations supported by the government that had a pro-Soviet character were the “Society of Friendship with the Soviet Union” and the “Society of Cultural Relations USSR-Britain”. These associations, together with “Great Britain - USSR” having financial and political support from the government, almost monopolized the cultural and social contacts between the two countries, and the example of “Pushkin House” was very unique and special. In fact, it was the only independent organization of the kind, as in Italy and France they were controlled and supported by political parties.

#### **1.4 Italy in the Cold War**

Italy’s position in the Cold War was very difficult and complex to describe. The country suffered incredible changes in a short period of time: from Fascism in the 1930s Italy passed to the Resistance (in 1943-1945) and the Reconstruction era (1945-1950), and then to the economic miracle at the end of the 1950s. Italy was competing with itself in the struggle between the USA and the Soviet Union; besides, there was also the Catholic Church that had its own policy and influence in the country. The main reason of such a twofold position in Italy was its geographic and geopolitical closeness to Western Europe, but at the same time growing communist mood among the masses when “the underground party of few thousand became by the end of the war a mass organization of 1.7 million (reaching 2.5 million in 1947), second only to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Brogi, A. *Confronting America. The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*. The University of North Carolina Press. Chapel Hill, 2011.p.14

Soviet policy towards Italy in 1944-8 is especially instructive as an example of a difficult balancing act performed by the Stalinist leadership in combining a rather cautious policy towards Italy (which belonged to the Western sphere of influence) with firm control over one of the major political forces of Italy, the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The Stalinist transformation of the PCI into a major instrument of Soviet geopolitical interests, in turn, precluded the possibility of a left-wing coalition dedicated to economic growth and the defence of Italian national interests from coming to power in the aftermath of World War II.<sup>31</sup>

But Italy, like the majority of European countries, needed US financial aid, so Italian politicians similarly showed their loyalty and support to the USA. The elections of 1948 showed the reaction of the masses to the first steps of the Marshall Plan in Italy.

Alle elezioni del 18 aprile 1948, cui parteciparono il 92% degli aventi diritto, la DC ottenne una schiacciante vittoria, raccogliendo il 48,5% dei voti e battendo nettamente il *Fronte democratico popolare*, la coalizione tra il PCI e il partito socialista (PSI) di Pietro Nenni, che si attestò al 31% dei consensi. I toni della campagna elettorale, che si svolse contemporaneamente all'arrivo nel Paese dei primi aiuti economici del Piano Marshall, furono particolarmente accessi, anche perché il partito comunista italiano era quello più forte (e con più seguito) di tutta l'Europa occidentale e agli occhi dei moderati e soprattutto degli anglo-americani rappresentava un temibile spauracchio.<sup>32</sup>

By the end of the 1940s, the interest of Italy in European integration declined significantly. The friendship with France and the French-Italian customs union project actually collapsed. The necessity to solve the Trieste question led to anti-American and anti-British moods among Italians because of the failure of De Gasperi's policy. Also American authorities began to lose faith in Italy as a

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<sup>31</sup> Aga-Rossi E. and Zaslavsky V. *The Soviet Union and the Italian Communist Party, 1944-8/* Gori F. and Pons S. (edited by). *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-53*, Macmillan Press Ltd, London, 1996. P.161-162

<sup>32</sup> Vottari G. *La guerra fredda*. Milano: Alpha test, 2002. P.20

partner even after De Gasperi's resignation and Pella's appointment. These aspects could have led to an improvement in relations with the Soviet Union, providing good reason to further develop ties, but not everything was so clear-cut and there were several problems standing in the way.

The next chapter is about how Soviet-Italian historical and political relations developed and changed, how the communist parties of both countries interacted, and how the policy of the Soviet and Italian communists was constructed in regards to culture and cinema.

## *Chapter Two*

### **Bilateral USSR-Italy relations after World War II**

#### **2.1 PCI and CPSU: the cultural-political developments**

The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was founded in 1921, three years later than the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and was the largest communist party in the Western Europe<sup>33</sup>, that characterize in a certain way that special relationship between the USSR and Italy, especially comparing to the Soviet policy towards another countries of the Western Europe. The figures of Antonio Gramsci, the founder of the PCI, and Palmiro Togliatti played an important role, as well as the fact that Italy was a fascist country before the Second World War, so it made the USSR and Stalin, personally, appreciate the Italian communist movement and support it by establishing bilateral relations in the end of the Second World War. Though it could seem that there immediately started a good friendship between the Soviet Union and Italy, the country where the fascism was defeated with the help of one of the strongest Resistance movement in Europe, in fact it was not so easy. Even the first post-war years were marked by leaps forward and back in the Soviet-Italian perception of each other.

The end of 1940s was a very contradictory for the USSR in the eyes of Italian population. On the one hand, there was a victory in the Second World War and growing popularity of Italian communists; on the other hand, there were other European partners and some controversial Soviet decisions (in Yugoslavia conflict, etc.).

In 1944 there was a complicated political situation in Italy: the country was yet divided between fascists (Central and Northern Italy) guided by Italian Social

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<sup>33</sup> In the beginning of the 1950 there were more than 2 million members in PCI

Republic of Salò and anti-Hitler coalition (the south of Italy) guided by the king Victor Emmanuel III and the government of the marshal Pietro Badoglio. The monarchy was a problem even between Italian communists, some of them wanted just to be united all together against the fascist power, another did not want to support the king at all. For example, when Palmiro Togliatti was in Moscow in 1943 he supposed that Italian communists could even take part in the government of Badoglio and the question of monarchy could be solved after World War II.<sup>34</sup> In 1944, though, Italian communists refused to join the government and demanded the renunciation of the king and dissolution of the government. The situation was rather difficult for the communists in Italy, so Eugenio Reale and Velio Spano (Tedeschi) asked Moscow for help in solving some of the actual problems, including the return of Palmiro Togliatti to Italy.<sup>35</sup> Before departing from Moscow, Togliatti met with Stalin on 4<sup>th</sup> of March in 1944, and together they discussed some points as: not demanding of the king's renunciation; possible participation of the communists in the government of Badoglio; concentration on uniting and consolidation against the Germans.<sup>36</sup>

Stalin saw those two political powers in Italy as a weakening of the country, and for him the geopolitical considerations were the most important at the time. Stalin was interested in a strong Italy as in counteraction to the Great Britain's influence. Already in 1944 Stalin was concerned about the future world's division and the future opposition with the partners of anti-Hitler coalition. So, the democracy and socialism in Italy were not so important for Stalin, actually, and he was ready to make Italian communists collaborate with the king and the government of Badoglio.

It is possible to say that it was Stalin who made Italian communists change their policy, and when Togliatti was back to Italy, he declared that the main idea was to be united against the German invasion, while the monarchy problem could be solved later (that change in the Italian communist line was called the "Neapolitan

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<sup>34</sup> Vacca G. *Togliatti sconosciuto*. Roma, 1994. P. 71–72.

<sup>35</sup> Narinskij M.M. *Togliatti, Stalin i "povorot v Salerno" // Vtoraja mirovaja vojna: aktual'nye problemy*. Nauka. Moskva, 1995. P.123-133

<sup>36</sup> РЦХИДНИ Ф. 459. Оп. 74. Д. 259. Л.8. (РЦХИДНИ – Russian Centre of Conserving and Studying of the Documents of the Modern History)

turn”). In the April of 1944 the communists entered the government of Badoglio (and it was called the “Salerno turn”).

The Trieste conflict in 1945 had a confrontation character where Italy and its Western partners were on the one side, while Yugoslavia supported by the USSR on the other.

At the same time the Soviet Ambassador in Italy Mikhail Kostyliov was sure about Italian disposition towards the USSR, and did not take too serious the influence of the USA and of Great Britain on Italian policy. Researcher Irina Khormach from the Russian Academy of Science wrote that he was too emotional and looked too optimistically on the reinforcement of the Soviet position in Italy.<sup>37</sup> Actually, when after the Second World War the blocs began to divide the world, the USSR was more interested in the Eastern Europe, leaving the Western one to the rivals. So, Italy was not the number one interest for the Soviet Union, though Kostyliov had his reasons to be optimistic as left-wing grew in Italian governmental circles, and the idea of a neutral position of Italy in its foreign policy was dominant. This idea was also supported by Pietro Nenni, the national secretary of the Italian Socialist Party and the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of De Gasperi, and also by Manlio Brosio, an important member of the Resistance movement, future Italian Ambassador in the USSR and future 4<sup>th</sup> Secretary General of NATO, as well as by the other politics too. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of March 1946 Italian ambassador Quaroni gave a diplomatic note to Dekanozov, the Soviet diplomat, saying that Italy was not going to join any of the blocs’ policy. The policy of neutrality was supported by the politics of social-democratic movement, of the left wing of the Christian Democracy party and by some figures in Vatican<sup>38</sup>.

Zonova Tatiana, a Doctor of Political Sciences and Professor of Diplomatic department of MGIMO (Moscow Institute of International Relations) described

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<sup>37</sup> Khormach I.A. “SSSR-Italia i blokovoe protivostoyanie v Evrope” (*USSR-Italy and bloc’s confrontation in Europe*). Moscow: Institut rossijskoj istorii RAN, 2005, v.1, p.54

<sup>38</sup> Zonova T. *Obraz SSSR v Italii kontsa 40-kh godov XX veka (The image of the USSR in Italy in the end of 40s of XX century)*/ Vestnik MGIMO Universiteta, №5, 2010. p.54

the anti-Soviet campaign that took place in Italy and worsened the image of the Soviets:

The real hostile campaign against the USSR started in the August 1945, when during the Potsdam Conference the Soviet delegation demanded to equate the peace agreement with Italy to the agreements with Germany's allies – Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Finland. The USSR also strongly demanded that Italy should pay the reparations, was going to control ex-Italian colony Tripolitania and as a part of reparation costs received some part of Italian fleet. The other subject of Italy's and Soviet Union's disagreements was the problem of repatriation of Italian prisoners of war. The number of the prisoners mentioned by Italians was contested by the Soviet side.<sup>39</sup>

In the summer of 1946 after the Churchill's speech ("Iron Curtain Speech"), delivered by him in Fulton in March, the image of the USSR significantly changed in Italy. So in order to counteract that speech supported by the Italian politicians (according to Togliatti) there were printed in Italy more than a million copies of Stalin's interview, where he blamed Churchill in launching the war against the USSR. The official newspaper of the Italian Communist Party "L'Unità" printed another million copies of the interview, so the left-wing propaganda worked rather well during the whole 1946 to fight against the refusal to collaborate with the Soviet Union. As a result in November 1946 the elections in Italy showed the growth of left-wing moods among the population: the communists were leaders in a number of important Italian cities - Turin (60%

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<sup>39</sup>Самая настоящая враждебная кампания против СССР началась в августе 1945 г., когда на Потсдамской конференции советская делегация поставила вопрос о приравнивании мирного договора с Италией к договорам с союзниками Германии — Болгарией, Румынией, Венгрией и Финляндией. СССР также настоятельно потребовал выплаты Италией репараций, намеревался установить опеку над бывшей итальянской колонией Триполитанией и получил в счет репараций часть итальянского флота. Предметом разногласий между Италией и Советским Союзом стал также вопрос о репатриации итальянских военнопленных. Численность военнопленных, указываемая итальянцами, оспаривалась советской стороной.

Zonova T. *Obraz SSSR v Italii kontsa 40-kh godov XX veka (The image of the USSR in Italy in the end of 40s of XX century)*/ Vestnik MGIMO Universiteta, №5, 2010. p.55

together with the socialists), Genoa (64%), Livorno (76%), Florence (55%) and Spezia (72%).<sup>40</sup>

Maybe the best way to see and to understand the actual situation in Italy after the Second World War and its disposition towards the Soviet Union is to turn to the Italian mass media of the period. The image of the USSR in the Italian press in the end of the Second World War and the first years after was studied in Italy by Laura Gobbo<sup>41</sup> who observed four main Italian editions: “La Stampa”, “Il Messaggero”, “Il Corriere della Sera”, “Il Corriere d’Informazione”. She identified three phases of the changing of the attitude towards the USSR in Italian press – beginning with 1945 when the Soviet Union was described as a winner of Nazism together with Great Britain and the USA in “Il Messaggero”, while the press of Salò, the seat of government of the Italian Socialist Republic, discredited it as a historic enemy of the Fascism and Nazism. This phase lasted till the liberation of Italy on 25<sup>th</sup> of April 1945. The second phase started with the liberation and finished with the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in December 1945, when the USSR was considered as one of the peace makers together with Great Britain and the USA. The Agreement signed by Churchill, Truman and Stalin was covered in Italian media in a eulogistic manner towards the Soviet Union, though there was already a dispute between the USSR and the USA during the London Conference of Foreign Ministers in September 1945 and it was clear that the opposite blocks had been already formed. With the Iran crisis of 1946 the third phase began, and despite of the international process of the world’s division, the image of the USSR for some time remained yet positive. Everything changed with the fourth phase and the Trieste Conflict when Yugoslavia was supported by the USSR, and the Soviets demanded reparation of the city from Italy.

In that period the reciprocal positions of the Americans and the Russians were going hard and at the same time grew the errors of the

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<sup>40</sup> Архив внешней политики Российской Федерации (Archive of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation) (АВП РФ). Фонд 098, опись 30, дело 14, папка 171, лл. 10-11.

<sup>41</sup> Laura Gobbo. *L’immagine dell’U.R.S.S. nella stampa italiana dal 1945 al 1947*. Sapienza Università di Roma, 2004, p. 232

reciprocal perception from the side of the commentators from the both parties in that case. Its consequence was that particular Anglo-American commentators whose writings were published in Italy, started to be a mouthpiece of series of scourging critics towards the Soviet Russia. From the other side the observers who were less involved could feel themselves free to examine more objective than before the policy of the Oriental power.

The conclusion of this fourth phase faced a temporary improvement of how the USSR was seen in Italy, an improvement that happened due to the agreement of the Trieste problem.<sup>42</sup>

The last fifth phase started with the UN conference in December 1946 and finished with the Truman Doctrine of March 1947, the beginning of the Cold War, according to some historians. The Italian view of the USSR significantly became worse as since that moment the role of a peace maker changed, and the Soviet Union was considered as a participant of a new battle. And in Italy the USSR was considered more responsible for the conflict than the USA.

So, as it can be seen here, the image of the USSR changed in the Italian press according to the international geopolitical situation. And it is interesting to note that in few years, since the end of the Second World War in 1945 to the beginning of the Cold War in 1947, that image changed completely: from the heroic and peacekeeping to the militant one.

Until it seemed that peace and concord between the nations were deferred for the future, Russian was seen like a heroic liberator of the Eastern

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<sup>42</sup> In questo periodo le posizioni reciproche degli americani e dei russi si andavano irrigidendo e parallelamente aumentavano gli errori di percezione reciproca da parte dei commentatori delle due parti in causa. La conseguenza di questo processo fu che, in particolare i commentatori angloamericani i cui scritti venivano pubblicati in Italia, cominciarono a farsi portavoce di una serie di critiche sferzanti nei confronti della Russia sovietica. Dall'altra parte gli osservatori meno coinvolti poterono allora sentirsi liberi di esaminare più obiettivamente di prima la politica della potenza orientale.

La conclusione di questa quarta fase vide un temporaneo miglioramento nel modo in cui l'U.R.S.S. veniva vista in Italia, miglioramento dovuto al raggiungimento di un accordo sul problema di Trieste.

Laura Gobbo. *L'immagine dell'U.R.S.S. nella stampa italiana dal 1945 al 1947*. Sapienza Università di Roma, 2004, p.225-226

Europe from Nazism, but as soon as the international situation got worse, since Italy was a part of the Anglo-American influence zone, the USSR became, in our dailies, the scapegoat of discords in progress. This made us reflect, as it was said in the introduction, on how the news is selected according to the conviction of the moment: until the USSR was considered as a hero nobody talked about its inner problems, or about the gulag or the purges that happened in the country rather often. As soon as it started to be overlooked with the suspicion, these arguments began to appear in the Italian newspapers.<sup>43</sup>

It is also curious to see that the image of Stalin didn't suffer those changes as his country's one did. It could be explained only by the fact that he was personally strongly connected with the victory over the Nazism and also with the industrial revolution in the USSR. At the same time Molotov's image changed significantly from the positive one, when there was an agreement with De Gasperi in Trieste situation, to a negative after his long polemics during the international conferences. Though he was obviously expressing the opinion of the country's leader, but Stalin could save his image of calm and wise politician while Molotov could make discussions of a kind.

Those were the periods mentioned by Laura Gobbo in her work regarded mostly the international political events that influenced Italy's relation with the USSR, but if to look more closely to mutual Italian-Soviet relations, it becomes more clear how and why the image of the Soviet Union changed in Italy.

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<sup>43</sup> Finché essa sembrava rimandare ad un futuro di pace e concordia tra i popoli, la Russia venne vista come l'eroica liberatrice dell'Europa Orientale dal nazismo, ma non appena la situazione internazionale peggiorò, giacché l'Italia faceva parte della zona sotto l'influenza angloamericana, l'U.R.S.S. divenne, sui nostri quotidiani, un po' il capro espiatorio dei dissidi in corso. Questo ci fa riflettere su quanto detto nell'introduzione su come si scelgono le notizie in base alle convinzioni del momento: finché l'U.R.S.S. era considerata eroica nessuno parlava dei suoi problemi interni, o dei gulag o delle epurazioni che pure avvenivano frequentemente nel paese. Non appena essa cominciò ad essere guardata con sospetto, questi argomenti cominciarono a fare la comparsa sui giornali italiani.

Laura Gobbo. *L'immagine dell'U.R.S.S. nella stampa italiana dal 1945 al 1947*. Sapienza Università di Roma, 2004, p.226

In the middle of the 1940s there was founded an Association Italia-URSS that occupied itself with all that was happening between two countries, mainly in a cultural sphere, but with the total control of the political powers.

## **2.2 Communist parties and culture: Association *Italia-URSS* and its activities**

### Italia – URSS

The Italian Association for Cultural Relationship with the Soviet Union (*L'Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'Unione sovietica*) or simply *Italia-URSS* according to some sources was founded in Rome in 1944. The other sources mention 1946, as, for example, the official edition of the Association<sup>44</sup>. The initiative of its creation belonged to a large number of intellectuals from cultural and political Italian elite, whose aim was to revive the cultural collaboration between Italy and the USSR lost during the fascist era.

Historic-documentary department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation states<sup>45</sup> that in January of 1944 Italian government took the first steps towards rebuilding the relations with the Soviet Union, though it was Allied Commission to govern Italy yet. It is important to mention here that Italian and Russian sources and even diplomatic correspondence of those years had no clarity about whose initiative it was.<sup>46</sup> Italian diplomats name the USSR to make the first steps towards, while the Soviet diplomats wrote the opposite. The reason could be that both governments did not want to provoke negative reaction of the

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<sup>44</sup> *L'Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'unione sovietica. Attivita' e struttura.* Roma, STEDO – Tip. dell'Orso, 1961

<sup>45</sup> [http://www.idd.mid.ru/inf/inf\\_27.html](http://www.idd.mid.ru/inf/inf_27.html)

<sup>46</sup> Zonova Tatiana. *Obraz SSSR v Italii kontsa 40-kh godov XX veka/ Vestnik MGIMO Universiteta, №5, 2010. p.53*  
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British-American colleagues, and the US Ambassador Averell Harriman criticized the Soviet recognition of Italy. Renato Prunas, a general secretary of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Italy claimed that the Soviet Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs Andrei Vyshinsky was the one who turned to him with such a proposal. Though the Soviet diplomat Aleksander Bogomolov in his reports referred to insistent appeals from Italian part.<sup>47</sup>

On the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1944 there was a letters' exchange between the head of Italian government Pietro Badoglio and the Soviet representative in the Advisory Council for Italy Aleksandr Bogomolov. The letters contained the declaration of the establishment of the direct relations between the Soviet and Italian government. It was a very special case in the world history that the countries that recently had been in war regulated such kind of relations without signing the treaty of piece.

Irina Khormach, a researcher from the Russian Academy of Science, wrote that on 14<sup>th</sup> of March in 1944 there were 'direct' relations established in Rome, while official diplomatic relations were established later that year – on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October. Andrei Vyshinsky who was Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, appointed by Stalin to the Allied Control Council on Italian affairs and was in touch with the Italian Communist Party in Naples explained to British and American ambassadors why the USSR established direct relations with Italy: unlike the Allies the Soviet Union didn't have any direct contact beforehand.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July the official representative of the Soviet government Mikhail Kostylev turned back to the building on via Gaeta, 5<sup>48</sup> in Rome that was left by the Soviet diplomats three years before, though there was no official breaking-off.

Finally, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1944 there were official relations established, and Kostylev got the assumption of an office in Italy, while Pietro Quaroni was appointed in Moscow, where he had already been since May, that means after the

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<sup>47</sup> Khormach Irina. Op.cit. c.23

<sup>48</sup> Today it is the address of the Russian Embassy in Italy.

establishment of the direct relations. The USA and Great Britain had already established formal diplomatic relations with Rome before the USSR.<sup>49</sup>

Stefano Pisu in his work<sup>50</sup> underlines that the Soviet historiography had not contributed enough in the studies of Italian-Soviet relationship of the post-war period and the times of the Cold War. Pisu and everybody interested in the topic have no choice but to base on the mass media of the time or few existing works by A. Protopopova or A. Vanin.

The access to the Soviet archives after the dissolution of the Soviet Union gave the opportunity to start the research on the Italian-Soviet relations completed by the Russian documentation. Still for today there were more studies on the relations with the fascist Italy than the studies of the relations' renewal between Moscow and Rome in 1944 and in post-war period.<sup>51</sup>

The Association since the day of its foundation launched two periodicals to inform the Italian public about the Soviet culture and life: *Italia-URSS* (in 1953 transformed into *Realtà Sovietica*, i.e. *The Soviet Reality*) and *Rassegna Sovietica* (initially *Rassegna della Stampa Sovietica*, i.e. *The Soviet Media Review*). The first one was of a general kind, while the second one was mainly devoted to the Soviet culture.

There were numerous cultural events cured and held by the Association, some of them had a national and vast character, like: the Convention on the Science and

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<sup>49</sup> Khormach. I. *SSSR-Italija i blokovoe protivostojanie v Evrope: vtoraja polovina 40ych godov-pervaja polovina 60-ych g. (URSS-Italia e la contrapposizione in blocchi in Europa: seconda metà degli anni '40-prima metà degli anni '60)*, Institut rossijskoj istorii RAN, Moskva 2005, p.27, 44.

<sup>50</sup> Pisu Stefano. *L'Unione Sovietica alla Mostra Internazionale d'arte cinematografica di Venezia (1932-1953)*. Università degli Studi di Cagliari, 2008. p.62

<sup>51</sup> L'apertura degli archivi sovietici dopo la caduta dell'URSS ha permesso di intraprendere delle ricerche, anche sui rapporti italo-sovietici, complete della documentazione russa. Tuttavia finora sono stati più gli studi relativi al legame con l'Italia fascista che quelli dedicati alla ripresa delle relazioni fra Mosca e Roma nel 1944 e al dopoguerra.

Idem

Culture in the USSR held in Florence on 24-25 November 1950 (Il Convegno sulla scienza e la cultura nell'URSS), the Convention on the Soviet Sport held in Milan on 19-20 November 1953 (il Convegno sullo sport sovietico), the Convention on Agriculture in the USSR held in Bologna on 20-21 November 1954 (il Convegno sull'agricoltura nell'URSS), the Convention in Florence on 25-27 January 1957 on the topic 'Convergence and Reciprocal Influence Between Italian and Soviet Culture' (Convergenza e reciproca influenza fra la cultura italiana e la cultura russa e sovietica), where for the first time in Italy there was started a historic research on the cultural Italian-Soviet relations. There were presented about 20 papers written and translated in both languages.

Highly important for Italy, and maybe it is possible to say for the whole Europe, was the meeting between Soviet and Italian poets on the topic: "The Poetry of our time" (*La poesia del nostro tempo*) held in Rome in Palazzo Braschi on 5-7 October 1957 and then later was followed on in Florence, Genoa, Venice, Ravenna, Naples, Palermo and Turin, and among its participants were more than 200 poets, writers and critics like: Bazhan, Zabolotsky, Vera Imber, Issakowsky, Martynov, Prokofiev, Smirnov, Slutsky, Surkov, Tvardovsky, Breitburg. It was the first contact established between the writers and poets of Italy and the Soviet Union.

Apart from the conventions there were also held a number of conferences, usually about 300 a year.

And there were some special conferences that are worth mentioning: the one cured by the professor Alla Massevic, vice president of the national Committee of Astrophysics of the USSR, held in the spring of 1960 in Florence, Milan, Turin, and in Rome in the Teatro Eliseo; then there was the celebration of Chekhov's birth anniversary with the speeches by di Carlo Bernari, Gian Carlo Vigorelli, Nicola Ciarletta, Pietro Zveteremich, Vito Pandolfi; the anniversary of Tolstoy with Moravia's and Zvetermich's participation; the celebration of Serghei Prokofiev 70<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary held in the Teatro Eliseo on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1961 with the conference by Fedele D'Amico and performances by maestros Scarpini, Gazzelloni, Favaretto and soprano Janukowic.

The most important event organized in collaboration between Soviet and Italian colleagues were:

- The exhibition of the Italian Drawing in the USSR in October 1956 with the participation of 36 Italian painters of the first rank;
- The Festival of the Italian song in Moscow and Leningrad;
- The large Italian Fashion Show in Leningrad and Kiev;
- The meeting of Italian and Soviet poets in Moscow with the participation of Quasimodo, Solmi, Cadoresi, Mucci and Buttitta.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of February 1958 in the Soviet Union there was founded a similar Association *URSS-Italia* (*SSSR-Italia*). It was a sign of the real interest of the Soviet people for the Italian culture that turned into a number of initiatives like conferences, cinema screenings of the latest Italian films, etc. to make the USSR learn better Italian culture.

The Association Italia-URSS in the whole period of its activity had straight contacts with numerous entities (apart from university institutions and cinema circuits): l'Ente Mercato Artigianato di Firenze, l'Ente Fiera del Levante a Bari, l'Ente Festival del Cinema del Fanciullo a Palermo, la Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze, la Mostra Internazionale del Cinema di Venezia, numerous national sport Federations, l'Ente Autonomo Spettacoli lirici dell'Arena di Verona, il Conservatorio di S. Cecilia, l'Accademia Filarmonica Romana, la RAI and Television.

In the main Italian cities and almost in all capitals of the provinces existed the departments of Italia-URSS with their own provincial coordination committees and board of directors.

For example, in Bologna, the city where the current research was made, the branch of the Association was situated in Via Riva di Reno, 75.

Every department had its own library and was responsible for the organization of conferences, photo exhibitions, music concerts, Russian language courses,

screenings of the Soviet films and documentaries, the Soviet stamps' and books' exhibitions.

In Florence, for example, there was a circuit "Massimo Gorki" (Maxim Gorky) of the local department of the Italia-URSS that had established close relations with the House of Culture in Leningrad and Kiev, and also with the culture entertaining circuits of Moscow factories "Rotfront" and "Likhachov". Due to those contacts Florence hosted different historic, art and economic conferences connected with Leningrad, the evenings of friendship with Ukraine with music concerts and Kiev photo exhibitions, and also exhibition of the photos sent by the workers of "Likhachov" fabric.

After Italia-URSS's proposal some touristic companies like Italturist and Inturist (both controlled and managed by the communist parties) programmed tours in the USSR for the specialized groups – doctors, architects, engineers and industrial technicians. Those specialized groups on their arrival to the USSR were considered as delegates of the Association and not just as simple tourists.

In 1954 there was founded the Centre of the Soviet scientific and technical documentation (*Il Centro di documentazione sulla scienza e la tecnica sovietiche*).

In 1960 the Centre for Russian Language and Literature of the Association appeared (*Il Centro Studi di Lingua e Letteratura Russa dell'Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'Unione Sovietica*).

In 1954 there was launched the Cinema section and the Cinematheque of the Association.

In 1954-1955 the only association that distributed the Soviet films in Italy had to be shut down and stop its activity. This fact could not be separated from the political situation of that time, the situation of a complete closure towards the Soviet world and towards everything that arrived from the USSR in any form. It is impossible to forget that that period dozens of films could not arrive to Italy and were banned by the censorship (as *The Turning point* by Fridrikh Ermler that was banned for exaggerating in showing the power of the Soviet army). Since 1956 the

situation began to change and a small and short attempt made by the companies to import the films was followed by a greater commitment from other distribution companies.<sup>52</sup>

The Association was searching, reuniting, revising, classifying and then distributing the films that arrived to Italy since 1946 and later: “classics” like *The Battleship Potemkin*, *Storm Over Asia*, etc.

In 1954 the Association organized about 1040 screenings, in 1955 already 2740, and in 1961 there were almost 25 000 screenings with 5 000 000 spectators participating.

In the beginning the screenings were limited in programme by only one film or one documentary without preceding by some presentation or at least informative notes, and, of course, without following discussions of the film contents. But soon that lack of information disappeared with launching of “Rassegna” (*Review*) and “Personali” (*People*) that had quite a success. “Il cinema sovietico e la guerra” (*The Soviet Cinema and The War*), “La Resistenza nei film sovietici” (*The Resistance Movement in The Soviet Films*), “La storia dell’URSS attraverso i suoi film” (*The USSR History Through Its Films*), “I classici del cinema sovietico” (*The Classics of The Soviet Cinema*), etc: these and others were the titles of “Rassegna” issues. The “Personali” was devoted to film directors, especially Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Dovzhenko. Generally every film in “Rassegna” was accompanied by the informative materials, or presentation, or even a debate.

The cinema section of the Association took part in the organization and preparation of the screenings of the Soviet cinema, contributing to realization of films and documentaries providing scenes, shots, archive pieces, music and etc.

The Association’s library “Antonio Banfi” was the fullest one specializing on the Soviet culture and science.

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<sup>52</sup> L’Associazione italiana per I rapporti culturali con l’Unione Sovietica. Attività e struttura. Roma : Tip. editrice dell’Orso, 1961. P.34

## Periodicals of the Association

The first issue of the “Realtà Sovietica” (*The Soviet Reality*) was launched in May of 1953. It was a monthly review that covered various topics of the Soviet life: culture, sports, science, etc. Today it could be considered as a propaganda edition, as it mostly reported about the success of the USSR, and sometimes there was a divergence with bourgeois and reactionary press.

Among its contributors in Italy there were prominent personalities of art and culture: Eduardo De Filippo, Vittorio De Sica, Renato Guttuso, Alberto Moravia, Luchino Visconti, Mario Del Monaco, etc. Not all of them were communists, but that was the particularity of the Italian periodical that was more interested in the topic (art) than in the politics. From the Soviet part participated: Ilja Ehrenburg, Boris Polevoi, Grigorij Alexandrov, Mikhail Sciolokhov, Konstantin Simonov, etc.

The edition was also organizing the exhibitions.

The periodical “Rassegna Sovietica” (*The Soviet Review*) appeared in 1946 and was a two-month edition. Often there were published the official documents or the statements of bilateral meetings. It was the most long-living periodical of the Association; its publishing lasted till the beginning of 1990s.

There were very few periodicals dedicated to the Soviet cinema, and all of them had a temporal character. First of all, there was a periodical “Cinema sovietico” (*Soviet cinema*) that lasted only two years, till 1955. First issues were monthly published and contained short news about new films that appeared in the USSR, translations of the materials from the Soviet cinema periodicals (mainly from *Iskusstvo kino*) and some directors’ abstracts with directors’ biographies and filmographies.

Se anche in altri settori la conoscenza della cultura sovietica in Italia si trova ad uno stadio iniziale, ciò si nota particolarmente subito dopo la liberazione del nostro paese sono ormai fuori della circolazione, numerosi altri film e documentari aspettano da molto tempo il visto di censura. La situazione non è migliore nel campo degli studi teorici e critici, sebbene il

cinema sovietico, con i suoi film e con la riflessione teorica che li accompagna, rechi per giudizio unanime un apporto cospicuo e originale alla cinematografia mondiale.

Cinema sovietico intende portare il suo modesto contributo ad una conoscenza obiettiva, diretta e continua dell'elaborazione teorica compiuta dagli studiosi sovietici nel campo del cinema, dei problemi e delle realizzazioni del cinema sovietico. Pertanto esso si propone di pubblicare i principali studi e saggi sovietici sulle diverse questioni riguardanti il cinema come fatto d'arte nella sua funzione sociale, da problemi di carattere critico-estetico: il realismo, il tipico, la funzione del regista, il colore, l'attore cinematografico, ecc. a problemi di organizzazione della cinematografia sovietica, alle questioni dello sviluppo dei vari generi cinematografici.

Oltre a questi saggi fondamentali, cinema sovietico pubblicherà recensioni di film, profili e filmografie dei maggiori registi, attori, operatori, scenografi, sceneggiatori sovietici. Indicazioni di carattere bibliografico, recensioni di libri sul cinema e brevi notiziari sulla vita e sulla produzione cinematografica nell'URSS completeranno il quadro che il nostro bolettino si propone di fornire.<sup>53</sup>

In 1954 periodical became bimestrial and contained also Italian cinema experts' notes about the Soviet cinema, while the major part of the issues were yet translations of the works publicated in the USSR.

Anche per questo *Cinema sovietico*, che vuol essere una rivista di informazione e di elaborazione culturale, si adopererà con l'adesione e il consenso di quanti desiderano far progredire la cultura cinematografica perché il film sovietico possa liberamente circolare nel nostro paese. La nostra rivista intende dare un serio contributo alla conoscenza obiettiva e diretta del cinema sovietico, nella sua interna dialettica, con la sua rigogliosa fioritura e con le sue deficienze, fornendo allo studioso e al lettore i testi e i saggi più significativi, che gli consentano di pervenire a giudizi più puntuali e pertinenti.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Cinema sovietico, n.1, 1953. P.1

<sup>54</sup> Presentazione in Cinema sovietico, settembre-ottobre 1954, p.2

According to the periodical, it was possible to buy in the Association's seat in Rome diapositive (slide) film strips with the most important Soviet films and documentaries.

Yet in the end of 1940s there was also the edition in Italy "Il film sovietico" (*Soviet film*) released by the Sovexportfilm – it was an informative bulletin curated by the PR office of this cinema institution. It contained all the titles of the recently made Soviet films, the plot and the cast, and it contained also the latest short news. The first issues arrived to Italy were in Italian language, but already in the end of 1950s Sovexportfilm launched periodical "Soviet Film" in several languages, excluding Italian: only in Russian, English, French, German, Spanish and Arabic. Though Italian cinetecas and libraries continued to receive that periodical in English every month. Another edition that Sovexportfilm was publishing was a catalogue of the Soviet feature films that arrived to Italy once a year too, and the languages of the issue were Russian, English, French and Spanish. The catalogue contained a list of all the Soviet films released in a year and small description of the most important works, especially those that were exported from the USSR. In the libraries of Turin there was also found the similar catalogue of 1957 released by Gosfilmofond<sup>55</sup> only in Russian language. In the introduction it was said the catalogue "should get the foreign cinema archives' staff acquainted with the vast collection of films prepared for the exchange".<sup>56</sup> Considering that it was the first ever issue, and it was not yet translated in other languages, it should have been a forerunning edition to the Sovexportfilm catalogue.

### Cultural activities between two congresses of the Association Italia-URSS 1949-1955

It is possible to say that the period after the War 1945, 46', 47' was a period of a vivid interest for the Soviet culture and of a promising growth of interchange

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<sup>55</sup> Gosfilmofond SSSR – State Cinema Fund of the USSR (cineteca)

<sup>56</sup> *Katalog sovetskikh khudozhestvennykh filmov*. Moscow. n.1. 1957. P.3

between two countries.<sup>57</sup> According to this informative issue about the cultural activities in the early 1950s organized by Italia-URSS, the lack of the regular supply of the Soviet books, films, discs and journals was caused by the customs restrictions. It took a long time to renew the direct relations between the Italian and Soviet bodies and institutions that in 1949 were, of course, much better than before the War. There took place a decisive opposition from the Italian authorities to all forms of direct contact – the delegation of the most famous Soviet artists in 1951 got a refusal for the residence in Italy. It caused the absence of the literal, artistic and scientific works and made it difficult for the Association to continue its activities.

Despite of the great difficulty with the lack of material and other general problems, the Association organized cycles of the Soviet film screenings, usually retrospective ones, tried its best to provide some specialized institutions with the scientific documentaries and collaborating with cine-clubs in Italy.

In those years some prominent Russian and Soviet artists were honoured in Italy by the events dedicated to them<sup>58</sup> and organized by the Association, among them were: Gogol, Tolstoy, Prokofiev, Pudovkin, Chekhov, etc. Those events were created with the participation of eminent Italian figures – professors Enrico Damiani, Luigi Salvini, Luigi Russo, directors Luchino Visconti, Vittorio De Sica, Alberto Lattuada, Gerardo Guerrieri, composers Goffredo Petrassi and Mario Zafred, writers Alberto Moravia, Cesare Zavattini, Carlo Levi, Corrado Alvaro.<sup>59</sup>

For example, the centenary of Gogol's death was commemorated in Rome in April of 1952 at the Teatro Eliseo by performing of several scenes from the writers' works directed by Luchino Visconti. In July of 1953, immediately after the death of Vsevolod Pudovkin there was held

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<sup>57</sup> Si può dire che nel dopoguerra, negli anni 1945, '46, '47, ad un periodo di interesse vivo per la cultura sovietica e promettente per lo sviluppo degli scambi tra i due paesi. *L'Attività culturale tra i due congressi 1949-1955*. Tip. dell'orso, Roma

<sup>58</sup> Some of the events mentioned below in "Major events Italy-URSS"

<sup>59</sup> *L'Attività culturale tra i due congressi 1949-1955*. Roma: dell'orso. 1955. P.4

in Rome the screening of “Admiral Nakhimov” with the speech of film critic Umberto Barbaro.

The concert of the Prokofiev’s music occurred in the March of 1954 in Teatro comunale in Florence the orchestra del Maggio musicale fiorentino.

In 1960 in Milan there were held several events commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Tolstoi’s death.

Courses of Russian language were organized in Rome, Turin and Milan already in 1946.

In 1950 for the Month of Italian-Soviet friendship arrived a group of prominent Soviet artists like composer Aram Khachaturian, painter Dementy Shmarinov, and others to meet Italian artisti. The concert of Khachaturian was streamed by RAI. Next year the Soviet delegation that consisted of Galina Ulanova, David Oistrakh, Emil Ghilels, Nadezhda Kasantseva and Maxim Mikhailov took part in the manifestations of Musical May (Maggio musicale) in Florence, with following concerts in Venice, Milan and Rome and being the first post-war musical event of the Soviet musicians playing for Italian public.

Nel 1953 si ha una ripresa degli scambi nel settore cinematografico con la partecipazione - non più avvenuta dopo il 1949 – dell’URSS al Festival cinematografico di Venezia e con l’allestimento a Mosca e a Leningrado di festival del cinema italiano.

In 1954 – delegazione di agrobiologi sovietici ricambia una visita, di un anno prima, di agrobiologi italiani.

Negli anni 1954-55... rappresentati al Maggio musicale fiorentino e all’Arena di Verona opere come Mazepa di Ciaikovski, Guerra e pace e Romeo e Giulietta di Prokofiev; con il museo dell’Hermitage che invia in Italia e propri quadri di Picasso e del Giorgione per le mostre qui allestite nel 1954 e nel 1955.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *L’Attività culturale tra i due congressi 1949-1955* . Roma: Tip. editrice dell’Orso, 1955. P.4

## Major events Italy-USSR

1946 – Festival of the Soviet cinema in Rome in teatro Quirino

1948 - 17-23 October, the Soviet film festival in Rome

1949 - Milan, Festival of the Soviet cinema in the cinema "4 fontane"

1949 - 9 October - 9 November, a Month of friendship with the USSR

1951 - Milan, a week of the Soviet cinema

1951 – months of Italian-Soviet friendship in Rome (since 1951)

1952 - Rome, a Month of Italian-Soviet friendship (“for the improvement of relations”)

1953/1954 - January, cinematographic agreement between Italy and the USSR, Moscow

1953 - 19-20 November, Milan, informative conference on the Soviet sport

1954 – The national council of the Association Italia-URSS

1955 – The Soviet films in Venice after 2 years of absence

1955 – Scientific conference in Milan

1955 - December, a week of friendship between the Soviet and Italian women

1956 – Cinematographic agreement signed between Italy and the USSR for commercial distribution of the Soviet films in Italy

1957 - September, the meeting between Italian writers and Soviet poets in Viareggio

1957 – In Rome (Centro sperimentale di cinematografia) and in Milan, week of the Soviet films.

There was launched a review “Rassegna del cinema sovietico” (organized by Unitalia)

1957 - 5-7 October, Rome, meeting of Italian and Soviet poets

1957 - December, Naples, Convention dedicated to the relations between Italian and Soviet culture

1958 - 18-20 January, Naples, Convention “Relations between Italian and Soviet culture”

1958 - 25-27 January, Florence, Convention dedicated to the relations between Italian and Soviet culture (cured by Association Italia-URSS)

1959 - 14-15 March, Rome, III National congress of the Italia-URSS

1959 - 20-31 July, Genzano, II National seminar of the Russian language and literature (Italia-URSS)

1960 - 12-13 March, Turin, Italian-Soviet convention on children's literature in the modern world (Italia-URSS)

1960 - April, Rome, debate "Chekhov and the destiny of the modern man" at International cultural centre "l'incontro" (Italia-URSS: ass. italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'unione sovietica)

1960 - 23 August - 4 September, III National seminar of the Russian language and literature "M. Gorkij" in Ponza (Italia-URSS)

1962 - 20-21 October, Rome, debate "Cinema and society"

Conference on the Soviet cinema in the library Einaudi

Debate on the Soviet cinema in palazzo Marignoli

1963 - April, Moscow, panel discussion of Italian-Soviet cinematographers (organized by Italia-URSS + Union of Soviet cinematographers)

1963 - 16-17 November, IV National Congresso of the "Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'Unione Sovietica", sala Boromini, Rome

1965 - October-December, n.4 of the review "Rassegna sovietica" with panel discussion organized by the publishing house Einaudi (in collaboration with the Association Italia-URSS)

1966 - May, Rome, Convention of Italian-Soviet historians

1966 - 22-24 November, Turin, Italian-Soviet convention of young architects

1967 - V Congress of the Association Italia-URSS

1969 - Autumn, Turin, theatre seminar "Meyerhold"

1969 - October, Rome, IV Convention of Italian and Soviet historians

1972 - International meeting in Sorrento dedicated to the Soviet cinema

1973 - 23-24 March, Rome, Italian-Soviet convention

1973 - end of March, IV meeting of Italian-Soviet cinematographers

1973 - Rome, week of the Soviet cinema

1974 - 11-13 January, Bologna, Italian-Soviet convention (of writers). The first meeting was held in Moscow in 1971

1975 - Bologna, seminar on the silent Soviet cinema of 1917-1930 held by Giorgio Gattei, at the seat of the Italia-URSS, via San Vitale

1975 - 23-24 September, Gargnano del Garda, symposium dedicated to the cultural linguistic relations between Russia and Romance language countries (Italian Association of Russian studies + Pushkin Institute)

1975 - 13 December, Ferrara, panel discussion "Actual role of the cinematographers in Italian and Soviet societies"

1976 - Verona, week of Soviet cinema

1977 January-March – cycle of conferences in Pordenone, at the Casa dello Studente (and following course of the history and culture: the Soviet cinema of the 1920'. Debate Eisenstein-Vertov) cured by the Centre of Cultural Initiatives of Pordenone

### **2.3 Communists and cinema in both Italy and the USSR**

L'attenzione che il PCI dedica al cinema come fenomeno culturale di massa e come settore produttivo assorbe in maniera rilevante il lavoro culturale del partito; d'altro canto era stato Lenin per primo a considerare il cinema "la più importante di tutte le arti" per l'edificazione della società socialista. [...] Il chiarimento politico seguente alle elezioni dell'aprile 1948 semplifica il quadro politico e rende il cinema terreno di scontro, dove l'ideologia spesso prevarica le ragioni culturali. [...]

Nella logica schematizzatrice della guerra fredda dunque era logico prevedere un PCI schierato in difesa del cinema italiano, che proprio agitando il vessillo della libertà cultura e della difesa della cultura nazionale avrebbe trovato una fenomenale arma propagandistica nei confronti del mondo intellettuale nella lunga e dura battaglia contro la censura e l'invadenza americana. D'altra parte le cose non sono così

semplici come appaiono a una prima superficiale lettura: il PCI, infatti, conduceva la lotta per un cinema libero in una prospettiva ristretta all'estetica realista, peraltro resa ambigua dalla compresenza all'interno del partito di una linea zdanovista e di una gramsciana.<sup>61</sup>

Italian film director and screenwriter Giuseppe Ferrara performed in 1973 at the convention "The function of the cinema in the struggle for the democratic renewal of the society" (La funzione del cinema nella lotta per il rinnovamento democratico della società) held in Rome on 23-24 March.<sup>62</sup> He underlined that Associations of the Labour movement fought for years for the independent cinema in Italy, and the main structures to realize that were Unitelefilm, CTAC and CREC, and also ARCI.

Consorzio Toscano CTAC and Consorzio Emiliano CREC were regional consortiums or circuits that independently organized events in numerous cinema halls in Tuscany and Emilia with their own distribution.

Association ARCI was one the most important Italian social promotion organizations founded in 1957 and that distributed the alternative cinema in Italy, 16/mm especially, and diffusing the Soviet films too.

- Culture: since its date of birth (1957), ARCI's mission is to offer recreational and cultural opportunities: music literature, dance, theatre, film festivals, courses, cultural programs, initiatives. Nobel Award winner Dario Fo operated inside ARCI's premises and within its centres for a long period, as well as many writers, film-makers, artists. Arci boosts young entrepreneurship in the cultural sector and co-operation among artists.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Consiglio D. *Il Cinema. Capitolo IV/ Il PCI e la costruzione di una cultura di massa. Letteratura, cinema e musica in Italia (1956-1964)*. Edizioni Unicopli, 2006. P.195-196.

<sup>62</sup> Ferrara G., intervento/Rassegna sovietica n°6, novembre- dicembre 1973, Tipolitografia I.T.E.R., Roma. P.55

<sup>63</sup> ARCI official website info: <http://www.arci.it/chi-siamo/dat/>

Unitelefilm mentioned by the famous Italian director Ferrara was a film studio (casa di produzione cinematografica) founded in 1963 in Rome under the initiative of the PCI, the Italian Communist Party. Luciano Romagnoli who was responsible at the Press and propaganda department (Sezione stampa e propaganda) of the Party, decided to organize an institution that would gather and conserve all the propagandistic documentaries realized by the Party, but at the same time could open its own production. Under gathering of propaganda films of the PCI was meant to collect all the works realized by series of central and peripheral structures of the Party. In 1964 the Unitelefilm started its own documentary production under the direction of Mario Benocci, ex partisan and a functionary of the press and propaganda department of the Party. Later the directions of the studios took film director Ugo Gregoretti (1970-1974), a journalist of the “Unità” and of the RAI Dario Natoli (1974-1977) and Paola Scarnati together with Luciano Vanni (1977-1981). Among the Italian authors of the documentaries produced at the Unitelefilm were Gianni Amico, Bernardo Bertolucci, Giuseppe Ferrara, Carlo Lizzani, Francesco Maselli, Elio Petri, Paolo and Vittorio Taviani.

In 1979 all the archive of the Unitelefilm was moved to Audiovisual Archive of the Democratic and Labour Movement (l’Archivio storico audiovisivo del movimento operaio), founded as an Association (Italian abbreviation ASAMO) under the presidency of Cesare Zavattini. In 1985 the archive transformed into foundation and nowadays exists under the abbreviation AAMOD. Its collections consists not only of the Italian documentaries, but also of the works by Soviet classics of cinema: Alexander Dovzhenko, Sergei Eisenstein, Nikolai Ekk, Grigori Kozintsev, Lev Kuleshov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Yuli Raizman, Abram Room, Dziga Vertov and a newsreel work by Esfir Shub *Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* .

It means that if the Archive had these works in possession, so Italian public had a free access to it, already knew the Soviet classic cinema and was able to watch it on demand.

Giuseppe Ferrara himself founded Cine 2000, whose aim was to promote and

produce the works that were blocked by the conditionality of the industry and of the power. All of his own works were produced by the cooperative Cine 2000

There took place four meetings of Italian and Soviet cinematographers:

1961 – in Rome

1963 – in Moscow

1965 – in Moscow

1973 – in Rome

The last meeting held in the March of 1973 in Rome hosted Soviet directors Sergei Gerasimov, Gleb Panfilov, Sergei Kolosov, Ravil Barytov, Grigory Chukhray and also critic Rostislav Yurenev. The meeting was preceded by a press-conference where the head of ANAC<sup>64</sup>, screenwriter Ugo Pirro explained to the public the aims of the meeting before the questions from the audience. After the conference there were screened Italian films in order to show them to the Soviet filmmakers: *Vogliamo i colonnelli* by Mario Monicelli, *Trevico-Turin* by Ettore Scola, *Last Tango in Paris* by Bernardo Bertolucci, *Love and Anarchy* by Lina Vertmüller and etc. Soviet films were shown in Italy to the public before the meeting, but these were not new films. According to the reports pronounced during the meeting, in Italy in 1972 three films out of eight what of American production, while Soviet films had 0,6 % of all the films screened in the country. ANAC representatives were speaking about the improvement of the work of the Soviet films distribution in Italy.

The very first post-war festival of the Soviet cinema took place in Rome in 1946. During the previous years of fascist era in Italy there were some mentions of the Soviet film in the press. It is interesting that in 1941 Russia was considered as an “enemy”, for example, the periodical *Cinema* (quindicinale di divulgazione cinematografica) wrote about studying Russian cinema: “chi conosce a fondo il proprio nemico lo ha già vinto a metà” (who gets to know his enemy good has

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<sup>64</sup> ANAC - l'associazione degli autori cinematografici (Association of the cinema authors)

already half won).<sup>65</sup>

The periodical mentioned in that material all recent publications about Russian cinema in Italian press – about Eisenstein's and Pudovkin's last works and some other new Soviet films in production in Oggi, a short history of the Soviet cinema in Film.

Among the films that were screened in Italy and are known to Italian spectators there were mentioned: *Ivan the Terrible*, *Thunder over Mexico* by Eisenstein, *Jolly Fellows* by Alexandrov, *Saint Petersburg Night (La tragedia di Egor)* by Roshal and Stroeva.

## Festival of the Soviet Cinema

17-23 October 1948 in sala delle Quattro Fontane in Rome

This was the second festival of the kind in Italy in a post-war period. There were 7 films in program, but no official booklet or any kind of official document survived, the only mention of the festival found was only in periodical *Cinema*:

E diremo che mentre la validità del Festival è stata comprovata dal buon livello dei sette film proiettati (film che nella loro varietà di scelta rappresentano senza dubbio un quadro ampio anche se incompleto dell'ultimo cinema sovietico), l'opportunità bisogna cercarla nel fatto che il cinema sovietico, quasi tutto scomparso dal circuito nazionale, è stato assente all'ultima Mostra cinematografica di Venezia.

Un film "cavalcata": L'educazione dei sentimenti di Marco Donkoj ,

un film politico-polemico: La questione russa di Mikhail Romm, ,

un film biografico: Pirogov di Grigory Kozintsev,

una commedia: La leggenda della terra siberiana di Ivan Pyriev,

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<sup>65</sup> Viazzi G. *Contatti col cinema sovietico*. In *Cinema* (quindicinale di divulgazione cinematografica), n. 123, 10 agosto 1941, p.84-85

Un film rivista: L'antico vaudeville di Igor Savchenko,  
un film di spionaggio: Atto eroico di Boris Barnet,  
un episodio storico: L'incrociatore Varyag di Victor Eisymont.<sup>66</sup>

## The Festival of the Soviet Cinema in Milan

30 October – 18 December 1949

The Italian Association of the cultural relations with the USSR (Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'URSS) for some years had organized in Milan and other cities a number of projections of the Soviet films, so in 1949 it was decided to launch the First Festival of the Soviet Cinema in Milan with the help of the Sovexportfilm direction in Italy and G.B.D.<sup>67</sup> that helped with the films' distribution. The films were dubbed and supported with the historic and critical information, and a separate watching room was assigned for the critics.

The screenings took place in the Cinema Dal Verme with the following schedule:

30 October – The Childhood of M. Gorki by M. Donskoi (1938)

6 November – Volga Volga by G. Alexandrov (1938)

13 November – Chapaev by S. and G. Vasiliev (1938)

20 November – The District of Vyborg by G. Kozintsev (1938)

27 November – documentaries of 1936-1946 years

4 December – Beleet parus odinokij by V. Legoshin (1937)

11 December – Circus by G. Alexandrov (1936)

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<sup>66</sup> Mida M. *Cinema russo a Roma* in *Cinema* (quindicinale di divulgazione cinematografica), 10 novembre 1948. P.46-47

<sup>67</sup> Italian distribution company that does not exist today.

18 December – Ivan the Terrible by S. Eisenstein (1944)

The films chosen for the event covered the period starting from 1934 till the end of World War II, moreover all the fiction films dated 1934-1938 years. Hence there were neither silent films, neither post-war period (up-to-date in 1949) pictures. Why so? The official programme of the Festival explained it as follows:

Perchè di fatto una notevole cerchia di persone conosce e ricorda in Italia, attraverso visioni per quanto parziali, i capolavori di Eisenstein e Pudovkin e, attraverso fotografie e letture i capolavori di Dovgenko, che uscirono nella prima decade seguita alla Rivoluzione; un pubblico ancora più vasto conosce la produzione postbellica che, seppure attraverso una serie di difficoltà dovute alle condizioni di monopolio del mercato italiano da parte delle case noleggiatrici americane, ha fatto il giro, bene o male, delle sale pubbliche. In Italia si ignora completamente la produzione che va dalla fine del muto alla Grande Guerra patriottica; anche gli studiosi del cinema, se posseggono alcuni dati, non sono perfettamente al corrente dei problemi caratteristici di questo periodo della cinematografia sovietica. Ne è seguita la convinzione che il “grande” cinema sovietico si è spento con la fine delle produzioni mute della famosa triade dei registi; d’altra parte, da queste produzioni ai film usciti nel dopoguerra, il mutamento di linguaggio, di contenuto, di soluzioni formali è tale da rendere impossibile la saldatura organica da questo periodo a quello, per chi non conosca tutta la linea di sviluppo della cinematografia sovietica, diremmo di più, a chi non sia al corrente della linea di sviluppo che la cultura sovietica ha seguito in relazione a tutti i problemi della costruzione del socialismo nell’U.R.S.S.<sup>68</sup>

That was the reason why for the Festival it was decided to choose the films that cover the missing period, it was necessary to get to know the cinema of those years to make it possible to organize future events without turning back, with the complete understanding of the Soviet cinema changes and progress. Though the

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<sup>68</sup> R. Rossanda Banfi, Presentazione in Festival del cinema sovietico, Poligono, Milano, 1949. p.3

idea of the Festival was not to show the films of the missing period to cinema experts, but to bring to a wide range of Italian spectators the image of the Soviet Union between those years, so they could better understand post-war films and to see that with the 1930s the Soviet cinema was not over. To make their idea work even better, the Festival direction decided to provide the spectators with the film documentation before the screenings, especially for the works that took part in the international festivals like those in Venice or Cannes. It was also possible at the Festival of the Soviet cinema to participate in different discussions, debates or to make questions about the films.

There were about two thousand spectators who visited the evening screenings every Sunday and about a thousand of people who attended the morning events, and the price for the entrance ticket was 100 lire.

Dai referendum emergono discussioni, dubbi, interessi specifici, difficoltà: tutti, anche coloro che attaccano gli organizzatori del Festival scambiandoli per agitatori di un Partito, anche coloro che si ribellano a questa o quella impostazione sociale di questo o di quel film, tutti finiscono col chiederci di continuare a proiettare film sovietici, di dar seguito al Festival.<sup>69</sup>

## The Soviet Film Week in Italy 1957

In November of 1957 in Rome and Milan took place a Week of the Soviet film that for some years already began to spread in Europe, in France or Yugoslavia. The Italian neorealist cinema that showed the real life in Italy after World War II was very popular in the USSR, and as a reciprocal gesture the best Soviet films of that time, almost all awarded at the international film festivals, were presented in

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<sup>69</sup> Banfi, R. *Presentazione* in Festival del cinema sovietico, Poligono, Milano, 1949. p.4

Italy.

The films were accompanied by the booklet with the films' plot summary and the informational notes about films' authors and actors, realized under the Sovexportfilm.

The films in programme were:

“Sorok pervyj” (*The Forty-First*) of 1956 by Grigori Chukhrai;

“Otello” (*Othello*) of 1955 by Serghei Yutkevich<sup>70</sup>;

“Vernye druz'ja” (*True Friends*) of 1954 by Mikhail Kalatozov<sup>71</sup>;

“Don Kihot” (*Don Quixote*) of 1957 by Grigori Kozintsev;

“Vysota” (*The Height*) of 1957 by Alexander Zarkhi<sup>72</sup>;

“Letyat zhuravli” (*The Cranes Are Flying*) of 1957 by Mikhail Kalatozov<sup>73</sup>;

“Karnaval'naja noch'” (*The Carnival Night*) of 1956 by El'dar Ryazanov;

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<sup>70</sup> Best Director Award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1956

<sup>71</sup> It was the seventh highest-grossing film in the Soviet Union in 1954 with almost 31 million tickets sold, awarded also by the Crystal Globe at the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival (together with the American film *Salt of the Earth* by Herbert J. Biberman). Although they have not been notably gay in the recent past, the Russian movie-makers apparently can be lighthearted if the mood is upon them. And, in "True Friends," a comedy filmed in pleasant pastel shades, which arrived at the Stanley on Saturday, they are being as carefree as larks, if not as light on their toes. A viewer may suspect that the plot is contrived here and there and that the party line occasionally is run unnecessarily, but the story of three pals—noted men in their fields—unexpectedly enjoying "the little pleasures of life," makes for a surprisingly relaxed and sometimes infectious adventure. [...] Director Mikhail Kalatozov may have been heavy-handed in some instances in having this comedy of errors portrayed, but these "True Friends" do get to see a bit of the scenic countryside. And, if their route is not as classic as that taken by the Kon-Tiki or Huckleberry Finn, they seem to be having fun and passing some of it along to an observer. A.W. *The Screen in Review: 'True Friends', Russian Film, Is at Stanley in New York Times*, November, 15, 1954.

<sup>72</sup> The Karlovy Vary International Film Festival 1957 winner.

<sup>73</sup> The only Soviet film in the history that won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1958 (though the Palme d'Or was introduced in 1955, and another Soviet picture “Velikij perelom” (*The Turning Point*) by Fridrikh Ermler had won the Festival's Grand Prix in 1946.

“Lurdgia Magdany” (*Magdana’s Donkey*) of 1955 by Tenghiz Abuladze co-directed by Revaz Chkheidze.<sup>74</sup>

## The Soviet Film Week in Italy 1963

This time the Week was also organized according to the agreements of cultural relations between Italy and the USSR. It was the second event of that kind after the same Week in 1957 that took place in Rome and Milan and had a chance to make the Italian public see the masterpieces like “Letyat zhuravli” (*The Cranes Are Flying*) by Mikhail Kalatozov and “Sorok pervyi” (*The Forty-First*) by Grigory Chukhray.

Ora a noi sembra un intervallo di sei anni o giù di lì sia eccessivo, almeno per quanto riguarda il cinema, e che pertanto sia opportuno, da entrambe le parti, esaminare la possibilità di abbreviare i tempi di attesa tra una manifestazione e l’altra: ad evitare, se evitare si vuole, di svilire lo scopo degli accordi nel cui ambito esse si svolgono.<sup>75</sup>

The programme of the Week contained seven films: six non-fiction films and one documentary (Kosmonavty – The Cosmonauts) shown at the first opening evening. Despite of the fact that there were no events in Italy dedicated to the Soviet films for almost six years, for the Week there were chosen only recent works, made in two preceding years. The films in the programme were:

Gusarskaja ballada (*The Hussar Ballad*) of 1962 by Eldar Ryazanov;

Devyat’ dnei odnogo goda (*Nine Days in One Year*) of 1962 by Mikhail Romm;

Kolleghi (*The Colleagues*) of 1962 by Alexei Sakharov;

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<sup>74</sup> The film was awarded the Prix du film de fiction - court métrage at the Cannes Film Festival in 1956 and a Special Prize at the Edinburgh International Film Festival 1956.

<sup>75</sup> Quaglietti, L. *La settimana del film sovietico. Una vittoria ed una sconfitta*, in Cinema 60, n.36 giugno 1963

Voskresenie (*The Resurrection*) of 1960 by Mikhail Shveitser;

Dikaya sobaka Dingo (*The Wild Dog Dingo*) of 1962 by Yuli Karasik (Gran premio della Mostra dei film per ragazzi);<sup>76</sup>

Molodo-zeleno (*Young-Green*) of 1962 by Konstantin Voinov.

### Soviet Cinema 1926-1927 in Bologna, 19-23 May 1975

If the first festivals of the Soviet cinema in 1950s were mostly organized by the Association Italia-URSS, already in 1970s the support of such kind of cultural events was much bigger. For example, this retrospective of the Soviet silent films in cinema Roma d'essai in Bologna was held with the support of: Mostra Internazionale del Cinema Libero di Porretta, Mostra Internazionale del Film d'Autore di San Remo, Sindacato Nazionale Critici Cinematografici Italiani, Cineteca Comunale, Circolo del Cinema P. Picasso Ucca, Club bolognese Cineforum, Commissione Cinema del Comune di Bologna, Associazione Italia-URSS. This list shows the growing interest in Italy towards the Soviet cinema, especially interest towards its history. Another proof of the real interest towards the films from the USSR was also the choice of the pictures for the programme: not usual famous classical works were chosen, but that time it were a bit different films to get Italians to know more about the Soviet culture.

Ora è giunto il momento di scoprire che il cinema sovietico degli anni venti non è riassumibile in modo esclusivo nei nomi dei quattro grandi (Eijzenstejn, Vertov, Dovzenko, Pudovkin). Ce ne fornisce l'occasione la presenta rassegna dedicata a sei film relizzati tra la fine del 1926 e il 1928 da quattro diversi autori che, sebbene meno famosi di quelli citati, non sono per questo meno significativi.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>In 1962 the film received Gran premio at the Mostra dei film per ragazzi (Festival of the Children Films) and in 1969 took part in the retrospective Il Film Sovietico per Ragazzi (the Soviet films for Children) (all in Venice).

<sup>77</sup> Cremonini G. *Episodi di un "realismo piccolo – socialista" ovvero: le gradevoli contraddizioni di un sistema/ Cinema sovietico 1926-1927*. Bologna.P.3

The programme of that festival included following films:  
19 May – La ragazza con la cappelliera (Devushka s korobkoi) and Una casa sulla piazza Trubnaja (Dom na trubnoi) by Boris Barnet;  
20 May – Don diego e pelagia (Don Diego i Pelagheja) and L'isola della morte (Sorok pervyi) by Yakov Protazanov;  
21 May – Il villaggio del peccato (Baby rjazanskie) by Olga Preobrazhenskaja;  
22 May – Via terza dei borghesi (Tretja Meshchanskaja) by Abram Room;  
23 May - La ragazza con la cappelliera (Devushka s korobkoi) and Una casa sulla piazza Trubnaja (Dom na trubnoi) by Boris Barnet.

During these years of building Italian-Soviet cinematographic friendship, there took place also visits of filmmakers to the studios in order to exchange the experience.

The first visit happened in 1958 when Soviet director Sergei Gerasimov came to Cinecittà and had a talk with Italian experts about the Film Studies in the USSR, being a professor in VGIK.

Abbiamo poi approfittato della visita del regista russo per rivolgergli alcune domande sulla struttura e sui metodi della scuola di Mosca, che è forse la più antica, essendo stata fondata nel 1922. Egli ci ha dichiarato che, in linea massima, essa non si differenzia molto dal Centro Sperimentale, tanto è vero che le Sezioni corrispondono esattamente a quelle esistenti a Roma, che le modalità di ammissione – soprattutto per quanto riguarda il titolo di studio richiesto – sono pressochè identiche e che i sistemi di insegnamento non si discostano gran che, dato che vertono su un giusto equilibrio fra le nozioni teoriche e l'esperienza pratica. [...] Abbiamo poi rivolto al signor Gherassimov alcune domande di dettaglio sull'insegnamento dell'Istituto, particolarmente per quel che concerne la regia e la recitazione.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> De Gregorio D. *Vita del C.S.C.* In *Bianco e Nero*, n.3, marzo 1958, p. V-VI.

In December of 1964 another Soviet director Mikhail Kalatozov together with Aleksandr Kalaganov, the Soviet cinematologist and vice president of the Union of Cinematographers in Moscow, and Fricis Rokpelnis (who was continuously called by Italian press as A. Rokpelnis), Latvian writer and the first secretary of the Union of Cinematographers in Latvia, visited Experimental film centre of Italian film school (Centro sperimentale di cinematografia). During their visit they had opportunity to meet with Fellini and Antonioni during the shooting process, and also had a meeting with the film studies students of the Centro.

Gli ospiti hanno visitato Cinecittà ed il Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia. Accompagnati dal commissario straordinario alla presidenza del Centro, avv. Nicola De Pirro, e dal direttore, dott. Leonardo Fioravanti, sono stati ricevuti dal ministro dello spettacolo, on. Achille Corona. Nel corso del cordiale colloquio sono stati auspicati più intensi scambi culturali tra l'Italia e l'URSS non solo nel settore cinematografico, ma anche in quelli dello spettacolo e del turismo. I sovietici si sono poi incontrati con insegnanti ed allievi del C.S.C. per un ampio e libero colloquio dove sono state scambiate impressioni sulle caratteristiche delle rispettive cinematografie.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *Vita del C.S.C.* in *Bianco e Nero*, numero 1, gennaio 1965, p. II

## Chapter Three

### Soviet cinema in Italy

#### 3.1 Previous studies, researches and critique in Italy of the Soviet cinema

The first interest for the Soviet cinema in Italy appeared, of course, in the era of the Russian (Soviet) avant-garde cinema, the period of silent cinema dating from 1918 till the end of 1920s.

All the studies of the Soviet cinema in Italy could be divided by two main objects of study:

- history of the Soviet cinema
- personalities of the most prominent Soviet filmmakers

The Soviet cinema history was well studied by Giovanni Buttafava, a number one expert in the topic, especially in the work “Il cinema russo e sovietico” (*The Russian and Soviet cinema*)<sup>80</sup>, that is actually the collection of his writings in *Cinema&Film*, *Cinema Nuovo* and etc. Buttafava was a film critic, essayist, interpreter and Slavonic scholar, who could be considered as the most important Soviet cinema expert. He dedicated almost thirty years of his life studying and collaborating with the Soviet filmmakers. In 1964 he arrived to the USSR for the first time for studying the cinema process in the Soviet Union, and became a friend to many young and important artists: poet Anatoly Naiman (who translated Leopardi together with Anna Akhmatova and was one of four Akhmatova Orphans<sup>81</sup>), poet and documentary screenwriter Yevgeny Rein, poet and ballet critic Gennady Shmakov (who lately emigrated to the USA). So, it is possible to

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<sup>80</sup> Buttafava G., Malcovati F. (a cura di). *Il cinema russo e sovietico*. Marsilio, Venezia, 2000.

<sup>81</sup> Akhmatova Orphans was a well-known poetic group from Leningrad of four poets and friends of poet Anna Akhmatova in the end of 1950s – beginning of 1960s: Joseph Brodsky, Yevgeny Rein, Anatoly Naiman, and Dmitri Bobyshev. Akhmatova was their poetic and spiritual mentor, and she, herself, highly appreciated poems of those four.

say, that on his first arrival and during his first several months in the USSR Buttafava immediately was surrounded by the Soviet dissidents and was participating in new cultural life and movements, born after the De-Stalinization. He translated the poems of the expelled poet Iosif Brodsky and made him known in Italy, remaining still the only translator of his poems in Italian. Buttafava was also famous for his works on Russian literature of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. His cinematographic friendship with directors like Otar Ioseliani, Nikita Mikhalkov and many others, his living in the USSR, visiting Soviet cinemateques in Moscow and Leningrad, speaking Russian language (so it was possible for him to read books and periodical not yet translated from Russian) made him a unique and special “bridge” between the cultures.

Gianni Buttafava had approached the film criticism in the period of cultural associativeness of the 50s, in contact with those Soviet films that were a daily bread for the film clubs of the time. [...]

Innumerable, of course, are his articles, catalogues and essays about the Soviet cinema, and it is difficult to remember all of the reviews of the films from the USSR organized by him, with his help, after his suggestions for the festivals of Pesaro, Turin and Venice...<sup>82</sup>

Apart from the above mentioned festivals, Buttafava prepared also the personal retrospective of the Lev Kuleshov's films in 1977 at the film festival in Porretta Terme.<sup>83</sup>

The works by Buttafava covered almost all the period of the Soviet state existence: from avant-garde of 1920s to the middle 1980s. The early period of the

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<sup>82</sup> Gianni Buttafava si era accostato alla critica cinematografica nel clima dell' associazionismo culturale degli anni 50, a contatto con quei film sovietici che erano il pane quotidiano dei cineclub del periodo.[...]

Innumerevoli naturalmente i suoi articoli, contributi, cataloghi e saggi sul cinema sovietico, e impossibile ricordare tutte le rassegne di film dell' Urss da lui realizzate, aiutate, suggerite, per i festival di Pesaro, Torino e Venezia...

“E' morto il critico Giovanni Buttafava” in Repubblica, 11 luglio 1990

<sup>83</sup> Buttafava G. *Il cinema di Lev Kulešov*. Porretta Terme : Mostra Internazionale cinema libero,1977

Soviet cinema history was studied in Buttafava's work "Avanguardia e realismo nel cinema sovietico" (Avant-garde and realism in the Soviet cinema)<sup>84</sup> and in the monograph "Il cinema dei soviet : 1918-34, morte e resurrezione del soggetto" (The cinema of the Soviet: 1918-34, death and resurrection of the subject) with the writings by prominent Soviet directors Vetrov, Pudovkin and Eisenstein<sup>85</sup>. The cinema of the period of the Khrushchev Thaw and its studies were gathered by Buttafava in a catalogue (called so by Gianni Rondolino in the book's introduction) "Aldilà del disgelo: cinema sovietico degli anni Sessanta" (*At the other side of the Thaw: the Soviet cinema of the sixties*)<sup>86</sup>. There Buttafava gathered writings by Vittorio Strada and Viktor Diomin, Andrei Tarkovsky, Maja Turovkaja, Vasily Shukshin and others; interviews with directors Andrei Konchalovsky, Marlen Khutsiev and Georgiy Daneliya.

If to continue looking at the books of a historical character about the Soviet cinema of the period of our interest (1950-1970), we hardly find numerous studies in Italy like of the Russian avant-garde. Apart from the Buttafava's general historical works, there is also one of the most full and informative editions "Storia del cinema mondiale" (*The History of the World Cinema*) edited by film critic and historian Gian Piero Brunetta. There were collected the works by the Soviet cinema scholars like Yuri Tsivian, Natalya Nusinova, Oksana Bulgakova and Mikhail Trofimenkov, covering the period in the Soviet/Russian cinema history from 1908 to the 2000s. The same edition contains also the works about Georgian and other Asian cinematography that used to be Soviet.

There is a number of important works about the cinema history written by Italian cinema experts: Manzoli G., Renzi R. (a cura di). *Tovarisc kino: c'era una volta il cinema sovietico*, Transeuropa, Ancona, 1996; Pellizzari L. *Il cinema sovietico dal Bortnikov all'Ivan*. Monza, 1964; Piretto G.P. *Gli occhi di Stalin*. La cultura

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<sup>84</sup> Buttafava G. (a cura di). *Avanguardia e realismo nel cinema sovietico*. Brescia : Circolo del cinema, dopo 1950

<sup>85</sup> Buttafava G. *Il cinema dei soviet : 1918-34, morte e resurrezione del soggetto; scritti di Aziga Vertov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Sergèj Ejzenstein*. Quaderni del circolo monzese del cinema, vol.9. 1967 (Lissone : Mariani)

<sup>86</sup> Buttafava G. (a cura di). *Aldilà del disgelo: cinema sovietico degli anni Sessanta*, Milano, Ubulibri, 1987

visuale sovietica nell'era staliniana, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 2010. These works are important because of the coverage of almost all the basic Soviet cinema history, the most detailed maybe in Italy.

Worth of mentioning some important works published in the Italian periodicals and concerning the period of the Soviet history that is of our interest that instead are not of the general character, but more detailes and concentrated on certain topics:

Il cinema delle repubbliche asiatiche sovietiche, venezia 1986;  
Buttafava, il giovane cinema sovietico in Bianco e nero, roma, n.11 1966;  
Gattei G. Il cinema sovietico e delle repubbliche socialiste dal 1959 a oggi. In "Il cinema contemporaneo", Milano, 1977;  
Liehm A. (a cura di). Serghiej Paradianov. Venezia, 1977;  
Strada V. Il giovane cinema sovietico, in Film'64, Milano, 1964;  
Film urss 70' la critica sovietica venezia 1980;  
Film urss 70, materiali critici e informativi venezia 1980;  
Il cinema delle repubbliche transcaucasiche sovietiche, venezia 1986.

The history of the Soviet cinema is not the main interest of the present research, though some of the facts and events that were not yet covered in the read and studied literature would be described.

The present research, being the work on the border between political history and the history of cinema, does not have many predecessors of a kind. The similar research project found was Stefano Pisu's PhD work *L'Unione Sovietica alla Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica di Venezia (1932-1953)/ The Soviet Union at the International Film Festival in Venice (1932-1953)* written at Department of Historic, Geographic and Artistic Studies of the University of Cagliari in 2008 and published later in a book in 2013.<sup>87</sup> This was the first research of the kind by Italian cinema researchers that was made interdisciplinary between political history and history of cinema; Pisu's research partly intersects

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<sup>87</sup> Pisu S. *Stalin a Venezia. L'Urss alla mostra del cinema fra diplomazia culturale e scontro ideologico (1932-1953)*. Rubbettino, 2013.

the interests of the present research, though Pisu as a historian refers mostly to the political events and the image of the USSR, while this research focuses on cinematographic details – films, persons, awards, press reception and etc. Besides, Pisu's interest was limited by the Venice Film Festival only, and the time period was distant.

Among the previous studies of the personalities of the most prominent Soviet filmmakers in Italy of the period of our interest (1950-1970) the first place belongs with a huge advantage to Andrei Tarkovsky. He is number one figure in Italy, not only due to his life and activity in Italy for some years, but also for the awards his films received at the international film festivals, as well as the fact that he did not return to the USSR in 1982 after he came to Italy for the shooting of "Nostalgia". Bibliography about Tarkovsky written in Italian occupies several pages, and more detailed description of the Tarkovsky's studies in Italy contains the Chapter 5. As well as the studies about Sergei Parajanov, another well-known on the West Soviet director who filmed his main works between 1951 and 1969. Another notable Soviet film directors like Kalatozov, Chukhrai, Danelia, Abuladze and etc. were not honoured with the books devoted to them, but Italians had opportunity to read translated works by Soviet authors, or the books by directors themselves, provided by the Association "Italia-URSS".

### **3.2 Forms of cinematographic collaboration between Italy and the USSR**

The Soviet officials used the cinema co-production for its purposes since long before the 1950-1970s. Such films was a good mean to show in a better way the Soviet way of life, it was very useful propaganda occasion. Besides, it was a good way to make films with the money of the others. After the Civil War in Russia the cinematographic production was in deep crisis, it was almost destroyed. It was also too expensive to buy film from abroad for realizing the pictures, moreover

because of the lack of foreign currency at that period in the country. So, the Soviets were open to all kind of collaboration, also thinking about to use the West films as propaganda of the new political system. Later in 1940s and following years the collaboration spread more towards the socialistic countries, and the Soviet filmmakers edified their colleagues the methods of the socialistic realism in cinema. In the times of Khrushchev, after the death of Stalin, the era of the first important collaborations with the capitalist states arrived. Such films had to be a peace- and friendship-building tool, but the Soviet idea remained always the same: to make a beautiful ad on the West of the Soviet way of life. It was often the reason to make different versions of the same film – in the USSR and in the rest of the world there could be different duration of the same film, different music used, some episodes were added or cancelled during the cutting, and very rarely happened to shoot different versions of the same episode. As a result, these films often came out not of very notable artistic merit.

The countries chosen for collaboration always depended on the political situation: the first came those with whom the USSR had good relations at the moment. In the end of 1950s it were mostly the French, but then Khrushchev was not satisfied with De Gaulle's credo about building "Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals"<sup>88</sup> and the friendship between France and Western Germany, so the cinema co-production with the French significantly decreased. The collaboration with Japanese filmmakers happened exactly during the periods of political friendship, and the most notable Oscar-winning film in co-production "Dersu Uzala" by Akira Kurosawa had its own political underlying basis against China. The film depicted the expedition to the Ussuri region, ex-Chinese territories (conceded to Russia in 1858) and furthermore co-produced with another unfriendly to China country – Japan. Cinematographic collaboration with the USA happened in the middle of 1970s when there was a period of warming in the Cold War. The most important but not commercially successful American-Soviet project was a fantasy film "The Blue Bird" (*Sinyaya ptitsa*) by George Cukor, that gathered a number of cinema stars

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<sup>88</sup> Dubinin Y. *Otnosheniya s nashei stranoi on namerevalsya stroit' na osnove bol'shogo doveriya/* Nezavisimaya gazeta, ot 23.11.2000.

like Elizabeth Taylor, Jane Fonda, Ava Gardner and etc. Another important collaboration was a documentary television series about World War II “The Unknown War” (Neizvestnaya voina) by Isaac Kleinerman and Roman Karmen, hosted by Burt Lancaster. Italians were one of the most active collaborators with the USSR, and these bilateral relations started in the beginning of the 1960s, while the 1950s were not yet marked by the cinematographic collaboration between two countries, except from the festivals and other events, such as meetings of Italian and Soviet filmmakers and etc.

The first to film in Russia was Giuseppe De Santis, attracted by the nature of the country: steppes covered with snow and ice were impossible to find in Italy. In 1968 there arrived Franco Cristaldi to make “The Red Tent” in the Arctic part of the Soviet Union. World cinema stars took part in the film, but it did not help and it was a flop in the box-office, though it did not stop Italians and the collaborations continued. The reason was also rather warm relations between the Communist parties of both countries.

### **“Italiani brava gente” (Attack and Retreat)**

The first big Italian-Soviet project was the film by Giuseppe De Santis in 1964 entitled in English “Attack and Retreat”, “Italiani brava gente” in Italian, literary means “Good Italian people” and in Russian “They Went to The East” (“Oni shli na vostok”).

Italian sources name De Santis as the only director of the picture, while English and Russian ones mention also Dmitri Vasilyev, famous Soviet director and co-director of “Alexander Nevsky” together with Sergei Eisenstein . The film “Italiani brava gente” was a coproduction of two great and important production centres of both countries: the Soviet Mosfilm and Italian Galatea S.p.A., the cinema production house (casa di produzione cinematografica) that does not exist

anymore, it was active between 1952 and 1965<sup>89</sup> but belonged to the most notable ones.

During the next years, the Galatea will get an important subsequent success (even an Oscar award with the Divorce Italian style), showing an extraordinary flexibility and capacity for risk: after another historical and methodological films it would be sufficient to remember in 1960 “Viva l’Italia” (*Garibaldi*) by Rossellini, in 1961 “Il sicario” by Damiani, “Fantasmi a Roma” (Ghosts of Rome) by Pietrangeli, “La viaccia” (The Lovers) by Bolognini, “Un giorno da leoni” (A Day for Lionhearts) by Loy, “Divorzio all’italiana” (Divorce Italian Style) by Germi, in 1962 “Salvatore Giuliano” by Rosi, “Una storia milanese” (A Milanese Story) by Eriprando Visconti and “I nuovi angeli” (The New Angels) by Gregoretti, in 1963 “I basilischi” (The Lizards) by Lina Wertmüller, co-produced with the ‘22 dicembre’ together with “Il terrorista” (The Terrorist) by De Bosio, and furthermore “Le mani sulla città” (The Hands over the City) by Rosi; in 1964, finally, “Italiani brava gente” (Attack and Retreat), the colossal reconstruction of the Russian campaign in the film by Giuseppe De Sanctis.<sup>90</sup>

The plot belonged to Giuseppe De Santis and famous scriptwriter Ennio De Concini who had already got Oscar a year before for *Divorce Italian Style* (Divorzio all’italiana) and who also participated, of course, in writing the script together with the director himself, an Italian writer Augusto Frassinetti,

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<sup>89</sup> Venturini S. *Galatea S.p.A. (1952-1965) : storia di una casa di produzione cinematografica /* Simone Venturini. - Roma : Associazione italiana per le ricerche di storia del cinema, 2001. - 247

<sup>90</sup> Negli anni successivi la Galatea otterrà una serie importante di successi (anche un premio Oscar con *Divorzio all’italiana*), mostrando una straordinaria duttilità e capacità di rischio: dopo altri film storico-metodologici sarà sufficiente ricordare nel 1960 *Viva l’Italia!* Di Rossellini, nel 1961 *Il sicario* di Damiani, *Fantasmi a Roma* di Pietrangeli, *La viaccia* di Bolognini, *Un giorno da leoni* di Loy, *Divorzio all’italiana* di Germi, nel 1962 *Salvatore Giuliano* di Rosi, *Una storia milanese* di Eriprando Visconti e *I nuovi angeli* di Gregoretti, nel 1963 *I basilischi* di Lina Wertmüller, coprodotto con la 22 Dicembre, assieme al *Il terrorista* di De Bosio, e in più *Le mani sulla città* di Rosi; nel 1964, infine, *Italiani brava gente*, la colossale ricostruzione della campagna di Russia ad opera di Giuseppe De Santis  
Brunetta G.P. *Il cinema neorealista italiano: Storia economica, politica e culturale* - Roma ; Bari : GLF editori Laterza, 2009. P. 28

Giandomenico Giagni and the Soviet writer and script writer Sergej Smirnov. The black and white film was released in two languages, Russian and Italian, was 146 minutes long in Italy and 153 minutes long in the USSR, and told the story of Italian participation in the Eastern Front during the Second World War, and especially the story of its heavy losses in the Battle of Stalingrad. Though the film was not set in Volgograd (Stalingrad's name since 1961) or its suburbs, but in Poltava (Ukraine now) and the small villages nearby: Chernechij Yar, Gora, Nizhnie Mlyny.

For the one of the key roles – of a young soldier Bazzocchi – there was invited American star Anthony Perkins, but he asked a million fee. Peter Falk “costed” ten times less, but was not young and, besides, one-eyed. And so De Santis chose Lev Prygunov for this role, who became the first Soviet actor to perform a foreigner in a foreign film.

Despite of the prohibition of the KGB agent accompanying the group, Prygunov began to lunch together with Italian in a separate vagon. It costed the actor a possibility to go abroad for the shootings, and he had many troubles at the Soviet studios too. These were the Soviet rules of that time.<sup>91</sup>

*Italiani brava gente* was one of the first films for the Soviet cinematographers made in co-production with foreign colleagues, generally speaking. Two different views on shooting process met together and faced a lot of difficulties, and maybe this fact showed the necessity of an agreement to be signed only on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1967 that regulated bilateral relations in cinema between two countries.

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<sup>91</sup> На одну из ключевых ролей — молодого солдата Баццоки — пригласили американскую звезду Антонио Перкинса, но он запросил миллионный гонорар. Питер Фальк «стоил» раз в десять меньше, но был немолод и к тому же одноглаз. И тогда де Сантис взял на эту роль Льва Прыгунова, ставшего первым советским актером, сыгравшим иностранца в иностранном фильме.

Вопреки запретам сопровождавшего киногруппу сотрудника КГБ Прыгунов стал обедать вместе с итальянцами в отдельном вагончике. Это стоило актеру возможности выезжать на съемки за рубеж, да и на отечественных студиях ему чинили препятствия. Таковы были советские нравы в то время.

Shirokorad A. *Glava 38. Kinomost Italia – SSSR/ Italia. Vrag ponevole.* – Veche, Moscow, 2010. p.250

It was difficult to work on the first joint cinematographic project, full of battles and multi-staged, not only because of the difference in mentality, but because of weather conditions too. The shooting was going on when it was thirty degrees below zero outside, and it was hard for the Italian staff especially. Nino Vingelli, according to Shirokorad, even lost his finger because of frostbite. Tatyana Samoilova's character Sonya was freezing in one of the episodes so the only way to shoot in such severe circumstances was to make a mannequin with actress's face.

From Italy to the USSR were brought for shootings several hundreds of Mannlicher-Carcano rifles, submachine guns Beretta, light and medium machine guns to be placed at the close-ups, while all the rest of the guns behind were replaced by the Soviet Mosin rifles and some German guns. All Italian military uniform was also brought from Italy, while with German and Soviet uniforms Mosfilm supplied the cast. The tanks and artillery were also used from Mosfilm military storehouse.<sup>92</sup>

De Santis had to work on the picture under unfamiliar circumstances. The shootings were set in Poltava region during hot summer and in the vicinities of Moscow during severe winter. In cold and frost a southerner De Santis without speaking Russian was directing background actors among which there were thousands of the Soviet soldiers, and he brilliantly managed to do it – the mass scenes in the film amaze by the power and vim.<sup>93</sup>

There exists also a video in Adriano Celentano's official youtube account that shows the casting for the main character of the "Attack and Retreat", and the comment under the video says that Adriano was accepted for the role but because

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<sup>92</sup> Shirokorad A. *Glava 38. Kinomost Italia – SSSR/ Italia. Vrag ponevole.* – Veche, Moscow, 2010. p.250

<sup>93</sup> Де Сантису пришлось создавать картину в непривычных для него условиях. Съёмки шли в районе Полтавы жарким летом и в Подмосковье лютой зимой. В мороз и стужу южанин Де Сантис, не зная русского языка, руководил массовой, в которой участвовали тысячи советских солдат, и он отлично справлялся с этой задачей – массовые сцены в фильме впечатляют своей силой и размахом.  
Baskakov V. *V ritme vremeni: Kinematograficheskij protsess segodnya.* Moscow: Izdatelstvo "Iskusstvo", 1982. P.300.

of the recent marriage with Claudia (Mori) he did not want to leave her<sup>94</sup>. Celentano could have been a good commercial move as he already was popular in the USSR as a singer, after his participation in Sanremo Music Festival in 1961.<sup>95</sup> The Festival itself was a huge success in the Soviet Union, it was streamed on the tv, and the participants became immediately the stars. Celentano had an amazing popularity in the USSR, so a film with his participation would have been a great success in the Soviet cinema. Producers should have known about it and that could be the reason they invited him for the casting. The film of De Santis was discussed during the IV Congress of the Italian Association for the cultural relations with the Soviet Union (Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'Unione Sovietica) held on 16 -17 November in Rome in Sala Borromini. Gianfranco De Bosio, director of the theatre Piccolo in Turin, proposed to deepen the problem of the Italian-Soviet co-production and declared the film as a great success:

This film was set in the USSR and considers a particular aspect of the Italian and Soviet relations (those of the war); but there are other problems - as De Chiara said yesterday – that probably would be interesting to know in the USSR, that certainly would be interesting to know in Italy; those relating to the life of the Russian people and the Italian people. Being able to shoot in co-production, in the atmosphere of the open dialogue on the cultural level, the films, even the cheap, that would face the specific problems of the Italian labour movement, could be of great interest and would be, on the other hand, the only way to realize films, that the Italian productive structures strongly refuse and impede for their reasons.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDF26K1AwcM>

<sup>95</sup> Celentano's discs in the USSR appeared already in 1950s

<http://www.celentano.ru/disco/ussr.htm>

<sup>96</sup> Questo film si svolge in URSS e riguarda un particolare aspetto dei rapporti italiani e sovietici (quelli della guerra); ma vi sono altri problemi – come diceva ieri De Chiara – che forse interesserebbe conoscere in URSS, che interesserebbe certamente conoscere in Italia; quelli relativi alla vita del popolo russo e del popolo italiano. Riuscire a girare in coproduzione, nell'ambito di un dialogo aperto sul piano culturale, dei films, anche a basso costo, che affrontassero i problemi specifici del movimento operaio italiano, potrebbe essere di grande interesse e sarebbe d'altro canto l'unico modo per arrivare a realizzare pellicole, che per il loro argomento le strutture produttive italiane rifiutano e ostacolano fortemente.

The film became the first incident of the kind and that is why it was highly important for the future building of Italian-Soviet collaborations in cinema.

**Documentaries: “38 minut v Italii” (38 Minutes in Italy),  
“Due ore in URSS” (Two Hours in the USSR, in Russian:  
Dva chasa v SSSR) and “USSR with the eyes of Italians”  
(SSSR glazami italiantsev)**

Worth mentioning is also the fact that in 1965 there was shot a non-narrative documentary film about Italy by the Soviet cinematographers with the script by famous writer Victor Nekrasov, who also did a voice-over. This film was made in a unique genre that is called in Russian “vidovoi”, that means travel film or panoramic film where there are shown the geographical or other local peculiarities in order to make spectators acquainted with certain region. So, the film *38 Minutes in Italy* had to tell and to show Italy to Soviet citizens who did not have opportunity to visit it (for certain reasons).

In the end of March or in the beginning of April 1965 together with Ilya Gutman, the director of the Central Studio for Documentary Film, we cut the film that lately was screened under the title “39 Minutes in Italy”. The material was shot mainly by Gurman in Italy, and adding some Italian newsreel we tried to unite everything in a unique work. It was a hard job, especially for me, an unexperienced person, but the process itself brought

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De Bosio G. *Nel teatro e nel cinema la collaborazione italo-sovietica/ Rassegna sovietica*, ottobre-dicembre 1963. P.110-111.

me a lot of pleasure. Several hours every day during two or three weeks I had to do with Italy, and that was not so unpleasant.<sup>97</sup>

The film was shot and directed by Ilya Gutman, the Soviet documentary director and cameraman who had experience filming the Second World War, the Ismoil Somoni Peak's expedition and important governmental Kremlin events. In 1960s he went to Italy to film the artists of the Soviet circus Popov O., Nikulin Y. and others who performed in Genoa, Turin and Rome. The documentary film produced in 1964 was entitled "Sovetskij tsirk v Italii" (*The Soviet Circus in Italy*) and showed not only the Soviet artists, their rehearsals and meeting with Italian public, but also some sight of Italian cities, including Venice. The next year, 1965, Gutman produced "38 minut v Italii" (*38 Minutes in Italy*) that was completely composed from the views to make the Soviet spectator know better Italy, its history and Italian way of life of that time. The film was not made in collaboration, but apart from the Italian cities and fabrics, Gutman also filmed and interviewed some important Italian figures like Gianni Rodari and his daughter, Mario Del Monaco with his wife.

There were no similar films about the USSR made by Italian filmmakers, but in 1960 Dino De Laurentiis Cinematografica distributed a Soviet documentary "Dve ore in URSS" (*Two Hours in the USSR*, in Russian: *Dva chasa v SSSR*) directed by a Soviet documentalist Roman Karmen. It was a 106 minutes panoramic film produced by Sovexportfilm<sup>98</sup> in order to introduce to foreign spectators the Soviet

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<sup>97</sup> В конце марта или начале апреля 1965 года мы с режиссером Центральной студии документальных фильмов Ильей Гутманом монтировали картину, вышедшую впоследствии на экраны под названием «38 минут в Италии». Материал картины в основном снят был Гутманом в Италии, и мы, добавив кое-что из итальянской хроники, пытались слепить все в единое целое. Работа была нелегкая, во всяком случае для меня, человека неопытного, но самый процесс ее доставлял мне неизъяснимое удовольствие. В течение двух или трех недель я ежедневно по несколько часов вновь общался с Италией, а это не так уж неприятно.

Nekrasov V. «V zhizni i pis'makh». *Memuarnye ocherki*. — М.: Sovetskij pisatel', 1971, p. 82-88

<sup>98</sup> Sovexportfilm was a State governmental agency founded in 1945 and responsible for the distribution of the Soviet films abroad. It also had a monopoly on the distributions of the foreign films in the USSR. It was preceded by Sovkino (1924-1933) and Soyuzintorgkino (1933-1945).

Union's sights and life: the film itself was a long tripp across the country to show its natural beauty and recourses, as well as the great constructive achievements of the regime. Of course, as it was produced by the state cinematographic agency, it was an example of a propagandistic film.

This feature film has pages of great spectator interest and other very beautiful and impressive ones, but overall it appears slow and lacking in sharpness. Besides, it hinders the film the commentary often rhetorically given, bombastic and of clear tone of propaganda.<sup>99</sup>

Another documentary-fiction *The USSR with the eyes of Italians/SSSR glazami italiantssev*, or sometimes also known as *News from the East/Novoe na vostoke* was made by Mosfilm studios in 1963 with the participation of mostly Italian filmmakers and had the same propaganda aim: to spread positive image of the Soviet country in Italy. Though there was a small attempt in the plot to be objective: two main characters, Italians traveling across the USSR, are very different. The first one sees everything in an optimistic way and admires the Soviet achievements; the second one is a pessimist who tries to find defects in everything. In the end, of course, positive things about the USSR predominate to leave spectators with the required image of the country. Film directors were: Tamara Lisitsian, Leonardo Cortese and Romolo Marcellini, a group of screenwriters consisted of: Georgy Mdivani, Ennio de Concini, Maurizio Ferrara, Elliana Sabata, Romolo Marcellini and Leonardo Cortese. The interpreters of the main characters were Soviet actors Rostislav Plyatt and Emmanuil Kaminka.

### ***The Red Tent (1969)***

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<sup>99</sup>"Questo lungometraggio ha pagine di grande interesse spettacolare e altre assai belle e suggestive ma nel complesso appare lento e privo di mordente. Gli nuoce, inoltre, il commento parlato spesso retorico, magniloquente e di chiara intonazione propagandistica." ('Segnalazioni cinematografiche', vol. 52. 1962

In this review, though, made by the magazine curated by Centro Cattolico Cinematografico it could be seen its not so favourable attitude towards the Soviet film.

<https://www.comingsoon.it/film/due-ore-in-urss/20856/scheda/>

*The Red Tent* (*Krasnaja Palatka* in Russian) was a film made in co-production between Italy (Vides Cinematografica), the USSR (Mosfilm/"Tovarisch" creative movement) and Great Britain (Paramount Pictures) in 1969. It was the last work of Mikhail Kalatozov, based on the novel by Yuri Nagibin of the same title about Italian general Umberto Nobile and his Arctic expedition. In 1972 the film was nominated as the best English-language foreign film for the Golden Globe award.

The cinematographer of the film was Leonid Kalashnikov, though initially Mikhail Kalatozov invited Levan Paatashvili, who mentioned in his memoirs that the very first collaboration on the film had been with the Germans:

The picture was supposed to be filmed in a wide film gauge (70 mm). The equipment and the colour film "Kodak" was provided by Germans. They also ensured the negative development and printing of the positive, not taking into consideration such "trifles" as a private airplane and special cinematography machine for the complex shootings. [...] Finally it wasn't agreed with Germans – they refused to collaborate with us, and an optimistic start was followed by a wearsome waiting for some new mythical foreigners.<sup>100</sup>

Italian producer Franco Cristaldi was the one who agreed to shoot film with the Soviet filmmakers, as only in the USSR he could get all kinds of ships and icebreakers, airplanes, helicopters and endless fields of ice, investing only 10 million of dollars.

This film gathered a huge amount of the best cinematographers of all the participating countries: Soviet director Kalatozov had already won Cannes Film

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<sup>100</sup>Картину предполагалось снимать в широком формате (70 мм). Аппаратуру и цветную пленку "Кодак" предоставляли немцы. Они же обеспечивали проявку негатива и печать позитива, не считая таких "мелочей", как частный самолет и специальная операторская машина для сложных съемок. [...] В результате с немцами так и не удалось договориться – они отказались с нами сотрудничать, радужное начало обернулось томительным ожиданием новых мифических иностранцев.  
Paatashvili L. G. *Polveka u steny Leonardo. Iz opyta operatorskoi professii*. "Izdatelstvo 625" Moscow, 2006. p.69

Festival with his *The Cranes Are Flying* (Letyat zhuravli), Nagibin was a famous writer and a future script author of Oscar-winning Kurosawa's *Dersu Uzala*, Sean Connery interpreted Roald Amundsen and Peter Finch featured as Nobile, Ennio Morricone wrote the music for the picture and Claudia Cardinale interpreted Nurse Valeria. She also was the reason of a conflict between script writer Yuri Nagibin and Italian producer Franco Cristaldi, her husband, who asked the writer to invent the love story for Cardinale's character.

This character was inserted into the script according to insistent request of the producer Franco Cristaldi. It was Cristaldi to insist that one of the main lines of the film plot should be the love story of Valeria and a young Swedish polar explorer Finn Malmgren (Finn is his name), a beautiful and sad story. [...]

But for the first time in this film, "The Red Tent", our filmmakers met another character – a character of a rich and experienced foreign producer. According to the contract conditions Franco Cristaldi got the right to invite foreign actors for the main characters, because it was him to pay them big money. And it was not a secret to anybody that the only female character in the film, a nurse Valeria, producer wanted only for his girlfriend - a very famous Italian movie star Claudia Cardinale. After several alterations of the already finished script Yuri Nagibin could not stand it more and refused to take further part in the project.

He was replaced by Ennio De Concini, one of the script writers of "Divorce, Italian style" awarded by "Oscar". It was him to write the character of Valeria in the script of "The Red Tent". Finally, the last details to add in the final script was Robert Bolt – an English writer and screenwriter, two-time "Oscar" winner.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Этот персонаж был введен в сценарий по самой настоятельной просьбе продюсера Франко Кристальди. Именно Кристальди настоял, чтобы одной из центральных сюжетных линий фильма стала бы история любви Валерии и молодого шведского полярника Финна Мальмгрена (Финн — это его имя), история красивая и печальная. [...]

Но впервые именно в этом фильме, в «Красной палатке», наши кинематографисты встретились и с другой ролью — ролью богатого и опытного зарубежного продюсера. По условиям контракта Франко Кристальди получил право на то, чтобы самому

The Arctic episodes were partly shot in the Moscow region, partly in the Leningrad region at the bank of the Gulf of Finland and partly in the real Arctic Region: in the Franz Josef Land, in Tikhaya Bay. The film's epilogue with the iceberg's formation was set near the Norway shore. The real icebreaker "Krassin", that rescued Umberto Nobile and his crew in 1928, was completely rebuilt in 1956 in the East Germany and was not anymore similar to the original one to be pictured in the film. It was replaced by another icebreaker "Sibiryakov" that had the resembling construction, but was significantly smaller than "Krassin". The model of the airship "Italia", 20 meters long and filled with helium, was built exclusively for the film shooting.

The premiere of the film took place in Italy in Rome on Christmas Eve on 24<sup>th</sup> December of 1969, and only four months later in Moscow. The Soviet version of the film lasted 158 minutes while the international one was 121 minutes, and also the music of these copies varied: international public listened to Ennio Morricone's work while the Soviet one – to Aleksandr Zatsypin's.

Cristaldi invested money into advertising, so Rome was full of ads: the minibuses were running through the city with the film posters, there were souvenirs in the shops with the actors and the glacier – pens, postcards, film shots, gramophone records, etc. There was even an airship "Italia" hovered above one of the Roman squares, hanging a large transparency with the film announcement. As some

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приглашать на главные роли зарубежных актёров, так как немалые гонорары им собирался ведь платить тоже он. И ни для кого не являлось секретом, что в единственной женской роли во всём фильме, роли медсестры Валерии, продюсер видел лишь свою собственную невесту — очень известную итальянскую кинозвезду Клаудию Кардинале. После нескольких переделок уже как бы готового сценария Юрий Нагибин не выдержал и отказался от дальнейшего участия в проекте.

Его сменил знаменитый Эннио де Кончини, один из сценаристов фильма «Развод по-итальянски», лауреат премии «Оскар». Именно он прописывал в сценарии «Красной палатки» образ Валерии. Наконец, очень важные штрихи в финальную сцену внёс Роберт Болт — английский писатель и сценарист, двукратный лауреат «Оскара».

Antonov V. *Dva filma//Solnechnyi veter*, №3, November 2008.

sources say, later the airship was brought to the USA to be launched in the sky over New York.<sup>102</sup>

By the time of the film premier at least four participants of the events and film characters were still alive: Nobile, navigator Alfredo Viglieri, Czechoslovak physicist František Běhounek and Soviet polar pilot Boris Chukhnovsky.

Producer of the film Franco Cristaldi planned also an encounter during the premier between Kalatozov and Umberto Nobile himself. The general that day said to journalists that he liked the film, though he also noted that the film authors fibbed in some cases. And later, some weeks afterwards, Nobile told in the interview that he was very offended with the words about the “hot bath”, that he had never ever said.

Despite the fact that it was the first film made in collaboration, Italian press mostly was negative towards the “Red Tent” and, for some reason, the main disadvantage was named the lack of documentation and the overestimation of the help to Nobile’s expedition by foreign sea rescue efforts.

Certainly, in 1928 from the part of the Italian press it was exaggeration to minimize the significant contribution made by foreigners, but it is not logical now to fall into the opposite error.<sup>103</sup>

It is a bit strange that Italian magazine criticized Kalatozov for inventing the love story with Valeria, as if it was not known that the producer Franco Cristaldi was a husband of Claudia Cardinale for whom this line in the plot was written:

Anche la presunta indifferenza di Amundsen e la sua prima intenzione di non occuparsi dei naufraghi vinta poi dalle insistenze di Valeria è totale frutto di fantasia; e che Valeria stessa sia un personaggio completamente inventato non

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<sup>102</sup> <http://seanconneryfan.ru/redtent.html>

<sup>103</sup> Certo nel 1928 da parte della stampa italiana si è esagerato a minimizzare il contributo fondamentale dato dagli stranieri, ma non è logico ora cadere nell’errore contrario. Gobetti P. *Tenda rossa in Bianco e Nero*. Gennaio/aprile 1970, p.271

è manco il caso di dirlo. Per altro non ci sarebbe nulla di male a inserire elementi di fantasia per arricchire un episodio storico, se servissero a spiegarlo meglio. Ma in realtà tutte queste aggiunte sono perfettamente inutili, quando non dannose a una migliore comprensione della storia.<sup>104</sup>

Ma i particolari sbagliati (od omessi) non sono che un indice di tutta un'allegria confusione e approssimazione con cui nel film si sono mescolate le cose autentiche con quelle di fantasia: non per malafede da parte dei realizzatori, ma perché un po' tutti vittime probabilmente delle cosiddette "esigenze" produttive, che in un film di tanto impegno finanziario e con tutte le complicazioni che porta con sé una coproduzione "colossale", hanno finito per travolgere le migliori intenzioni e annacquare anche la forza di quel messaggio di fede nell'amicizia e nella solidarietà umana di fronte alle sciagure che pure era, e rimane in parte, la ragione d'essere più valida del film.<sup>105</sup>

Initially, as it was already mentioned above, the cameraman for the *Red Tent* was chosen by Kalatozov and it had to be Levan Paatashvili at first, because Sergey Urusevsky, who worked with Kalatozov on *The Cranes Are Flying*, was busy with his own director's debut. Paatashvili went to the Norwegian Svalbard (formerly known as Spitsbergen) and to the Cape Chelyuskin for shooting the nature scenes, also from the helicopter. These shootings were made in a 70 mm film format for Italian colleagues to see and to understand better the resources and the conditions needed for the future film. The Soviet film crew went to Rome to show the shot frames to the producers, and as it was not often that the filmmakers from the USSR come to visit Italy, there was organized kind of reception of the delegation. Dino De Laurentiis showed them his studios with the highest pavilion of 25 meters, the Soviets visited, of course, Cinecittà and its pavilions used for the Fellini's films, they also watched how cinematographer Carlo Di Palma was

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<sup>104</sup> Gobetti P. *Tenda rossa in Bianco e Nero*. Gennaio/aprile 1970, p.272

<sup>105</sup> Idem

shooting Monica Vitti with Tony Curtis for “La cintura di castità” (*On My Way to the Crusades, I Met a Girl Who...*)

Cinematographer Paatashvili had a chance to talk to Pasqualino De Santis, brother of Giuseppe De Santis, and discuss with him how to work with the Kodak film, that was a new and yet unknown in the USSR, while Italians had it already in use. Another cinematographer to help Paatashvili with advices was Alfio Contini who accompanied the Soviet operator during his test technical shootings. During that trip to Rome, in the film laboratory there was the first screening of the Arctic shootings for both Soviet and Italian crew of the “Red Tent” on a high-resolution film gauge screen. Franco Cristaldi chose a music of Adagio “Albinoni” for the film, and all together it made a great impression on all the present.

The effect was, frankly speaking, amazing, and the Italians first of all began to ask me, how much money I received for each bear I shot. The question was rather unusual for me, the Soviet citizen. I knew nothing about market relations, as well as I do today. I did not explain to them the complicated Soviet mathematics, when to the miserable daily allowance there was added the Far North compensation, so I tried to joke showing with hands that I got a lot. Anyway they could not have understood that shooting in extreme conditions from the helicopter I was risked the life for the love to cinema.<sup>106</sup>

Levan Paatashvili soon left the project. After coming back to Moscow Kalatozov changed his idea about operator and chose Leonid Kalashnikov, who was mentioned as the only cinematographer in the film credit titles.

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<sup>106</sup> Впечатление было, прямо скажем, ошеломляющим, и итальянцы первым делом спросили меня, сколько я получил денег за каждого отснятого медведя. Вопрос для советского человека был весьма непривычен. О рыночных отношениях я тогда мало что знал, как, впрочем, и сейчас. Я не стал объяснять им сложную советскую математику, когда к нищенским суточным прибавлялась северная надбавка, поэтому отшутился и стал показывать руками, что очень много. Они все равно не смогли бы понять, что я, снимая с вертолета в экстремальных условиях, рисковал жизнью только ради любви к кино. Paatashvili L. G. *Polveka u steny Leonardo. Iz opyta operatorskoi professii*. “Izdatelstvo 625” Moscow, 2006, p. 69-78

## **Waterloo (1970 film) by Bondarchuk**

Soviet director Sergei Bondarchuk released in 1967 his *War and Peace* (Voina i mir), the most expensive film ever made in the USSR, that was also a great success. 135 million tickets sold in the Soviet Union and number of prestigious international awards received: Golden Globe and Academy Award for the Best Foreign Language Film and, of course, the Gran Prix of a Moscow International Film Festival. These facts persuaded Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis to make a new epic film in collaboration with the Soviet filmmakers, and exactly with Bondarchuk – the most keen director in shooting war and mass scenes. It was very clever at that time as the Soviet filmmaking industry could offer vast steppes with numerous mass scenes dressed in any kind of military uniform and with a large number of any type of arms and weapons. Besides, the costs in the USSR were much less than in Hollywood or in Europe. Charles Esdaile, a Professor in History (Napoleonic Europe, Modern Spain) of the University of Liverpool, indicated many historic inaccuracies in the film and called it “not the place to look for an objective narrative”, but underlines its technicalities:

Made on a specially created (and quite passable) recreation of the battlefield with the aid of no fewer than 15,000 Soviet soldiers and a stellar cast comprising Rod Steiger, Christopher Plummer, Virginia McKenna, Jack Hawkins and Orson Welles, *Waterloo* was clearly intended as a “blockbuster.” Even the generous aid of the Soviet government could not reduce its cost, and the final budget of some £12,000,000 made it one of the most expensive productions ever to hit the silver screen. However, merely throwing resources at a project is not in itself enough to make the exercise worthwhile, and the end product proved deeply disappointing.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Esdaile C., *Waterloo (1970): A Critical Review in Fiction and Film for French Historians*, Volume 5, Issue 6, April 2015  
<http://h-france.net/ffh/the-buzz/waterloo-1970/>

From the original author's 4-hour version of the film there remained 134-minute version for outside the USSR and the 123-minute Soviet copy of the film.

De Laurentis and Bondarchuk evidently decided that this was the Napoleon they wished to market and the chief thrust of the battle narrative told in the second half of the film would attempt to explain away Napoleon's failure in a way that maintained unsullied his reputation as one of the great commanders in history (thus, the start of the battle is delayed by the need to dry up the mud left by days of rain; French subordinate commanders make blunder after blunder; and the emperor is alternately wracked by the absence of his wife and child, and gripped by periodic bouts of illness).

A twenty-eight page guide to the making of the film and, more especially, to the course of the battle, was published at the time of its release and put on sale in cinema foyers.<sup>108</sup>

The film did not have a success in America, despite international stellar cast and English language of the movie. It was a complete box office failure in the USA.

Sergei Bondarchuk's "Waterloo," which opened yesterday at the Criterion Theater, has at least to its credit that it means to be about the battle itself, essentially about the events of June 18, 1815, which resulted in Napoleon's defeat and the end of his second bid for power. As to the film's historical accuracy, I am not competent to say. In matters of record it seems to follow the encyclopedia accounts of the battle; in places it feels rather like

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<sup>108</sup> Esdaile C., *Waterloo (1970): A Critical Review in Fiction and Film for French Historians*, Volume 5, Issue 6, April 2015  
<http://h-france.net/ffh/the-buzz/waterloo-1970/>

an encyclopedia account. But the sense of the film itself is another matter, and the particular dullness of Bondarchuk's attempt to translate history into cinema makes "Waterloo" a very bad movie.<sup>109</sup>

Though already mentioned History Professor Charles Esdaile wrote that NYT critic was not so right and that "the rest of the review suggests that the author knew little about the period and that his comments were unduly harsh".<sup>110</sup>

### ***I girasoli (1970)***

In 1970 Vittorio De Sica directed *Sunflower* – the film made in co-production between Italy (Compagnia Cinematografica Champion), the USSR (Mosfilm) and France (Les Film Concordia), and distributed in Italy by Euro International Film. The film got Academy Award nomination for the Best Music by Henre Mancini.

It was another film after "Italiani brava gente" by De Santis that concerned the topic of the Second World War and the Italian participation in it on the territory of the USSR. The set that took place in the Soviet Union could be divided into 3 parts: 1) the retreat of the Italian army near Stalingrad; 2) the life of Antonio (interpreted by Marcello Mastroianni) in the Russian countryside; 3) arrival of Giovanna (Sofia Loren) in Moscow. The first part of the shootings in the USSR took place on the ice of the Volga river near village Gorodnya, near the city of Tver. The Russian countryside was set in village Zakharkovo (Tushino today) and Kolomenskoye, both near Moscow. The third part of filming took place in some important places of Moscow like metro, GUM (the main Soviet and Russian department store that faces the Red Square), the Cathedral of St. Michael the

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<sup>109</sup> Greenspun R. *Screen: A Battle Fought Strictly for the Camera: Bondarchuk Directs Craig's 'Waterloo' Rod Steiger Portrays Ill-Fated Napoleon* in *New York Times*, 1 April 1971.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=980CE6DD163EEF34BC4953DFB266838A669EDE>

<sup>110</sup> Esdaile C., *Waterloo (1970): A Critical Review in Fiction and Film for French Historians*, Volume 5, Issue 6, April 2015  
<http://h-france.net/ffh/the-buzz/waterloo-1970/>

Archangel in Tropariovo (that also appeared in the cult Soviet film *The Irony of Fate, or Enjoy Your Bath!/Ironia sud'by, ili S legkim parom!* by Eldar Ryazanov).

It was not the first time for Sofia Loren and producer Carlo Ponti in the USSR, in 1965 they came to the IV International Moscow Film Festival to present “Divorzio all’italiana” (*Divorce Italian Style*). Some Russian sources mention that one of the episodic characters was interpreted by Eleonora Yablochkina, also known as Lora Guerra, future wife of Tonino Guerra. That meeting could be called important one not only for those two, but for the cinema too: Tonino thanks to Lora became friend to many Soviet filmmakers, including Tarkovsky, who left the USSR with Guerra’s support (see Chapter 5). Though, more spread versions mention their meeting in 1975 at the Film Festival in Moscow.

At the first glance the film should have been a total success: famous Italian director De Sica shoots in the USSR two international stars Marcello Mastroianni and Sofia Loren. The problem was the topic chosen – the missing in action Italian soldiers. The most part of the survived in the war soldiers died in the Soviet captivity from hunger and diseases. And, of course, the officials of the USSR could not admit those facts, and there was rather steady opinion in Italy that those soldiers were still alive, lost in the camps, married Russian women and being prohibited to contact their relatives in Italy. The Soviet power in its turn destroyed a lot of cemeteries of Italian prisoners of war in the USSR trying to hide the traces.

The reasons why “Girasoli” was accepted to be film in the USSR could be different: the importance of the Italian film stars involved, the opportunity for Lyudmila Savelyeva to become famous on the West (she was already an iconic Soviet actress with her interpretation of Natasha Rostova in the epic *War and Peace/Voina i mir* by Serghei Bondarchuk), the lack of money in the Soviet cinematography, etc. The question of the appearance of the Italian cemeteries on the screen was raised by the Soviet officials when the shootings were already finished, though the whole process was controlled by the Soviets, and the Soviet filmmakers took part in it. Apart from Savelyeva who interpreted the Russian wife

of the main character, there was also the Soviet screenwriter in the film crew – Giorgi Mdivani, who worked together with Tonino Guerra and Cesare Zavattini. In his letter to the TsK KPSS<sup>111</sup> Mdivani wrote:

It was recommended to help in the production of the film by the Embassy of the USSR in Italy according to intergovernmental agreement about bilateral cinematographic collaboration dating 30 January 1967. Before shooting the script was read and studied by all our proper organizations both in the USSR and in Italy. The film is an antiwar one, about the humanism of the Soviet people. The film shows not only how the war kills, but how it destroys the lives of millions. The film involuntarily opposes the Soviet way of living to the life of modern Italy with its strikes, prostitution and etc.<sup>112</sup>

As Mdivani mentioned in the letter that the script was read and studied, it makes difficult to understand why the Soviet officials changed their mind. Besides, Carlo Ponti came twice to Moscow with the uncompleted film and showed it to the Soviet filmmakers and different functionaries, agreeing with them to organize the film premier on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March (of 1970), the International Women Day as the film tells the story about the life of two women – Italian and Russian. Suddenly during the organization of premier's process the Soviet power asked Ponti to cut the scene where Giovanna (Sofia Loren) visits the Italian cemetery in Ukraine. It was explained to Italian side that the Soviet ambassador in Italy Nikita Ryzhov reported about growing neo-fascist moods among Italians, who demand the giving back of prisoners of war and the remains. Carlo Ponti refused to cut the film as it damaged the film idea and turned back to Italy.

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<sup>111</sup> TsK KPSS – the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

<sup>112</sup> Помочь постановке этого фильма было рекомендовано посольством СССР в Италии по межправительственному соглашению о совместном кинопроизводстве от 30 января 1967 года. До начала съемок сценарий фильма был прочтен и изучен всеми соответствующими нашими организациями как у нас, так и в Италии.

Фильм антивоенный, о гуманизме советских людей. И картина показывает, что война не только убивает, но и калечит судьбы миллионов. В этом фильме невольно сопоставляется советский образ жизни с образом жизни современной Италии, с ее забастовками, проституцией и так далее.

Zhirnov E. *Sodruzhestvo s italianskimi kinematografistami – sploshnoe nadyatel'stvo*/Kommersant-Vlast, n.10, 14.03.2005

The premier of the film happened in Rome on 13<sup>th</sup> of March, and Mdivani was sent from the Soviet part some days before the event to convince Ponti to cut the scene. The cemetery episode was not deleted, but there were added the titles that all events were fictitious and any similarity to actual events were coincidental, and Ponti promised to the Soviet ambassador that all the film crew would confirm that there were no Italian cemeteries in the USSR. It did not help and the Soviet spectators were strongly advised not to go to the cinema to see the film, though at the same time the film was a great success in Italy.

The Russian periodical “Kommersant-Vlast” in 2005 published archive documents regarding the film. In the report of the head of ideological department of KGB<sup>113</sup> Philipp Bobkov it was said:

The authors of the film “Sunflower” aimed to show the advantages of the Western way of life and the lack of the basic culture of the Soviet people. The film tendentiously confirmed, in particular, the ideas of the bourgeois propaganda that there exist in the USSR large cemeteries of Italian soldiers and until today the return of the Italian prisoners of war is delayed.<sup>114</sup>

Bobkov also mentioned that the Soviet ambassador received the threat from Italian right-wing organizations that 20 Soviet diplomats in different countries of Europe would be murdered if the USSR did not start to extradite the Italian prisoners of war. It is clear that the official reception of the film was negative in the USSR, the head of the “Sovinfilm”<sup>115</sup> and VGIK<sup>116</sup> professor Otar Teinishvili called the film

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<sup>113</sup> KGB – Committee for State Security in the USSR.

<sup>114</sup> Авторы фильма ‘Подсолнухи’ стремились показать преимущества западного образа жизни и отсутствие элементарной культуры у советских людей. В фильме тенденциозно подтверждаются, в частности, измышления буржуазной пропаганды о том, что в СССР якобы существуют громадные кладбища итальянских солдат и до настоящего времени задерживается возвращение на родину итальянских военнопленных. Zhirnov E. *Sodruzhestvo s italianskimi kinematografistami – sploshnoe nadyvatel’s tvo*/Kommersant-Vlast, n.10, 14.03.2005

<sup>115</sup> Sovinfilm was Soviet cinema studios founded in 1968 and produced more than 500 international fiction, documentary and animated films. Among the films produced by the studio were: Oscar winning “Dersu Uzala” by Akira Kurosawa, Emmy Award winning mini-series “Peter the Great” by Lawrence Shiller and Marvin J. Chomsky, awarded in Venice “Brigands-Chapter VII” by Otar Ioseliani, awarded in Cannes “Nostalghia” by Andrej Tarkovskij and etc.

‘the most harmful, libelous picture and its release on our screen would have been a great political mistake’.<sup>117</sup> He accused the heads of the Goskino in neglecting the offences and insults and being interested more in economic benefit: the film brought to the Soviet cinematography 475 thousand of dollars while there were invested initially 175 thousand of rubles.<sup>118</sup>

“Girasoli” turned out to be a scandalous collaboration between Italy and the USSR, the Goskino issued a decree to tighten the control over the films made in co-productions. All the news projects that were ready at the moment were closed. For example, there should have been a musical comedy “In the city of Togliatti”, or another title “Alberto and Masha” about Italian workman who comes to the Soviet Union and falls in love with the Russian girl, but it was not realized despite of the years of preparation.

### **“Alberto and Masha”**

Georgiy Daniliya in his memoirs described a story of an unrealized Italian-Soviet film directed by Mikhail Kalatozov and featuring Alberto Sordi. Kalatozov proposed Daniliya to be a co-author of the script together with the classic of Italian neorealism, Cesare Zavattini. The producer of the project was Dino De Laurentiis.

Actually, the film was thought and organized around the figure of Alberto Sordi, who was a great star at that time. At first Sordi’s wish was to interpret an ordinary workman, and De Laurentiis asked to shoot the film on the ship going down the Volga river, while Kalatozov asked the screenwriters to insert the episode of the fire. Daniliya had already started to work on his film *Hopelessly Lost* (Sovsem

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<sup>116</sup> VGIK – the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography, the main film school of the USSR and Russia.

<sup>117</sup> «...это вреднейшая, пасквильная картина и выпуск ее на наш экран явился бы грубейшей политической ошибкой.»

Zhirnov E. *Sodruzhestvo s italianskimi kinematografistami – sploshnoe nadyvatel'stvo*/Kommersant-Vlast, n.10, 14.03.2005

<sup>118</sup> 1 ruble = 0,9 USD in 1970, according to the Central Bank of Russia

propashchiy) about Huckleberry Finn together with his colleague Viktoriya Tokareva, when he got the proposal from Kalatozov, so he interrupted his work and involved Tokareva to work with him and with Italians. According to Danelia<sup>119</sup>, everything was organized badly from the Italian side, Zavattini instead of arriving to the USSR in April of 1971 came only in August to start to work, when it was impossible to organize the trip down the Volga river because of the cholera epidemic in one of the Volga cities Astrakhan'. After staying two weeks in Moscow and working with Daneliya on the script in the "Sovetskaja" hotel, Zavattini returned to Italy, asking the Soviet screenwriter to write the whole script and send it to him only for checking. Daneliya finished the work with Tokareva when suddenly there was changed the director of the Mosfilm studio because of a scandal with Italian filmmakers.

And suddenly they fired the head of Mosfilm. The reason was that two years ago when filming "The Red Tent", Italians presented him a shotgun. Everybody was informed about it (the head of Mosfilm always bragged about the gun), but it was necessary to create a scandal now. All our commanders got scared and claimed that they have nothing to deal with the new Italian project of director Kalatozov. - But it were you to invite Zavattini! – Kalatozov was perplexed. – You organized the meetings, the parties. Why?! - Under the programme of cultural exchange, - they stated. Kalatozov had heart problems after such impudence and got to the hospital.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Daneliya G. *Khozhdenie po mukam/ Chito-grito*, Moscow: Eksmo, 2006. P.449

<sup>120</sup> И тут вдруг со скандалом снимают директора "Мосфильма". Причина скандала — два года назад во время съемок фильма "Красная палатка" итальянцы подарили директору охотничье ружье. Все об этом знали (директор все время хвастался этим ружьем), но скандал почему-то понадобился сейчас. Все наши начальники перепугались и на всякий случай заявили, что к новому итальянскому проекту режиссера Калатозова никакого отношения не имеют. — Но вы же сами вызывали Дзаватини! — опешил Калатозов. — Устраивали встречи, банкеты! Зачем?! — В порядке культурного обмена, — заявили они. От такой наглости у Калатозова стало плохо с сердцем, и он попал в больницу. Daneliya G. *Khozhdenie po mukam/ Chito-grito*, Moscow: Eksmo, 2006. P.449

The project stopped for a while and Daneliya already started to work on his Soviet film when he was invited to continue Italian film as a director, because Kalatozov was ill and did not feel good enough.

So in the beginning of May 1972 there arrived in Moscow Rodolfo Sonogo, Italian screenwriter whose name is straightly connected with Alberto Sordi. Sonogo with his wife Allegra, their son Giulio, director Daneliya with screenwriter Tokareva, with two interpreters Vartanov and Serovskiy, with the executive producer Karlen Agadzhanov went in the ship trip down the river Volga to begin working on the film. Sonogo invented several different plots, but his Soviet colleagues had to explain him that the Goskino (State Committee for Cinematography) censorship would not let them pass. When finally, the plot was confirmed by everybody, Sonogo came back to Italy, and Daneliya and Tokareva wrote the synopsis. Initial plot looked like this:

Vasin, a resident of the village on the Volga bank (who should have been interpreted, of course, by Evgeniy Leonov), sent an invitation to his Italian friend Alberto with whom he was fighting during the War against the fascists with Italian Resistance movement. Alberto arrived with his wife and a son. Vasin went to meet him, but the friends lost each other at the airport. Alberto with his family had to arrive to the Volga village himself – by the ship. In Yaroslavl he missed his ship. And dashing and funny adventures follow.<sup>121</sup>

The translated plot was sent to Italy and was confirmed by Italian filmmakers, and the work immediately began. Daneliya went to Italy with interpreter Serovskiy to finish the work on the script together with Sonogo on a villa in Sabaudia, near Rome. The only problem was that Sordi did not like the final plot, he did not want

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<sup>121</sup> “Васин, житель деревни на берегу Волги (его, естественно, должен был играть Евгений Леонов), послал приглашение своему другу итальянцу Альберто, вместе с которым во время войны сражался с фашистами в итальянском сопротивлении. Альберто прилетел с женой и ребенком. Васин встречал его, но в аэропорту друзья разминутись. Альберто с семьей добирается до волжской деревни самостоятельно — на корабле. В Ярославле он отстал от корабля. И дальше лихие и смешные приключения”.

Idem

his character Alberto to arrive in Russia with his family. He asked to insert a love story between Alberto and a Russian girl.

And Sordi's wish was extremely important as, according to Dino De Laurentiis's words, it was written in the contract that the script should be approved by the actor beforehand. Daneliya had to make a new script and the shootings were postponed again from summer to winter time.

Sonego and Daneliya invented a new plot where Sordi's character alone arrived to Russia, as the actor wanted, and invited him to approve their new idea.

All that Daneliya and Sonego were writing every evening was translated by interpreter Valeriy Serovskiy. Goskino (State Committee for Cinematography) confirmed new plot with a Russian girl Masha and her love story with an Italian.

After ten days of working on a new plot, the screenwriters met again with Sordi and he wanted to change the script again, he asked to eliminate the Russian male character from the story. Daneliya this time did not agree and asked Sordi to change the director.

De Laurentiis proposed to make two versions of the film, Italian one and Soviet one, as it had already been done with "The Red Tent" by Kalatozov and with "Waterloo" by Bondarchuk. Daneliya had to agree, as Goskino already confirmed the shootings, the actress to interpret Masha (Marianna Vertinskaya) and etc, when suddenly Dino De Laurentiis changed Italian screenwriter again. Sonego appeared to be under the contract conditions with another producer according to which he could not work with De Laurentiis, so it was again Cesare Zavattini to continue writing the film. Zavattini and Sordi accorded new idea of the film: the character of Sordi should be Chichikov from Gogol's "Dead Souls" – an Italian cheater arrived to Soviet Russia to buy 'souls' of dead kolkhozniks (Soviet collective farmers).

The same time there arrived a Soviet delegation in Rome to sign the contract, there were: Mosfilm's director Nikolay Sizov, the head of Foreign Affairs

Department of Goskino Aleksandr Slavnov, the head of “Sovinfilm” Otar Teneishvili, executive producer of the film Karlen Agadzhanov and composer Andrey Petrov.

Both parties at the “Cinecittà” studios in Dino De Laurentiis’s office agreed the contract (though there was no screenplay yet): the amount of shooting days in Italy and in Russia, the certain people of a film crew from Italian side to work in Russia, the Soviet staff to work in Italy, the amount and even the metric area of the studios in both Italy and Russia, cameras, film, editing, music and etc. The film title was “Alberto and Masha” and it was agreed to write it on a clapperboard in Russian and English. The contract was signed by Dino De Laurentiis from Italian side and by Nikolay Sizov from the Soviet one.

According to Daneliya’s words, the film was not realized, the official reason was not nominated by the Soviet director, but he mentioned the disagreement with Sordi as the main problem. Two years lasted the film preparations that ended by nothing.<sup>122</sup>

However, there are also Italian sources that mention the story of that unrealized project. There are several discrepancies in the film title, in the plot and, of course, in critics.

Rodolfo Sonogo remembered in his turn the work with the Soviets a bit differently. It was the Soviet censorship to stop the ideas of Sonogo, but the personality of De Laurentiis was described by him very close to Daneliya’s one.

Sono arrivato tardi in Russia. Ci andai la prima volta nel 1971 in missione diplomatica per conto di Dino De Laurentiis il quale, sulla scia de *La tenda rossa* di Cristaldi dell’anno prima, aveva in mente un tipico colpo grosso “alla De Laurentiis”: arrivare a degli accordi con i russi per produrre dei film sostanzialmente a spese loro. Film naturalmente colossali. I russi non avevano un dollaro però “tenevano” molti mezzi: paesaggi, treni, eserciti, masse, sterminati magazzini di incredibile roba vecchia... Ogni cosa era

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<sup>122</sup> Daneliya G. *Khozhdenie po mukam/ Chito-grito*, Moscow: Eksmo, 2006. P.449-492

dello Stato ed il cinema ovviamente pure... Dino sognava di fare film grandiosi con pochi soldi.

Certo non avrei giurato di essere proprio io il più idoneo ambasciatore di questa impresa, ma Dino aveva deciso così ed io accettai anche perché Allegra è una grande amante della poesia, della letteratura e dell'arte russa... Il napoleonico Dino aveva programmato una vera campagna di Russia: primo giorno, viaggio; secondo giorno, riposo; terzo giorno, incontro ufficiale con il ministro della Cultura; quarto giorno... Nel giro di otto giorni avremmo dovuto arrivare alla definizione del primo di una lunga serie di progetti.<sup>123</sup>

E anche De Laurentiis, di tutti quei suoi sogni grandiosi e voraci, non portò a casa nulla. Cristaldi era riuscito a dare La tenda rossa proprio perché quello era il film epico polare che non aveva niente a che fare con niente di niente né di quella URSS di tiepidi disgeli, di scambi di scienziati e di mostri d'arte, né del pianeta Terra in quell'inizio d'anni Settanta.

In extremis mi venne da proporre ai russi la cosa per loro più inaccettabile: un film di viaggio.

“Ma guardate che con i soldi con cui Dino De Laurentiis fa i titoli di testa d'uno dei suoi mammut, io potrei fare un filmettino come ho fatto in Svezia con Il diavolo”.

“Ti costruiamo tutto quello che vuoi. Qui, sulla collina della Mosfilm...”.

“Ti costruiamo, ti costruiamo, ti costruiamo...”.

Poveretti! Si vergognavano. Si vergognavano del loro paese. Avevano sacrificato la vita quotidiana e la carta igienica all'orgoglio militare, alla gara nello spazio. Ero diventato molto amico di Georgij Danelija il quale, pure entusiasta della mia idea, mi guardava un po' spaventato: “Non insistere, Rodolfo, è molto bello, ma non te lo fanno mai fare!”.<sup>124</sup>

The plot, according to Italian sources on July of 1971, did not include love story between Sordi's character and Russian woman, but yet included the long trip

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<sup>123</sup> Sanguineti T. *Il cervello di Alberto Sordi: Rodolfo Sonego e il suo cinema*. Adelphi edizioni s.p.a., Milano, 2015. P.454

<sup>124</sup> Sanguineti T. *Il cervello di Alberto Sordi: Rodolfo Sonego e il suo cinema*. Adelphi edizioni s.p.a., Milano, 2015. P.455

across Russia. Though the Russian character was not mentioned too, and Daneliya wrote about his later elimination from the script.

“A quanto risulta – stando alle indiscrezioni che circolano -, il film dovrebbe raccontare la storia di un tecnico italiano che si trova in URSS per ragioni di lavoro, e precisamente a Città Togliatti, dove, come è noto, è stata costruita la grande fabbrica di automobili che produce la versione sovietica della italiana 124. Sordi sarà il tecnico incaricato di provare l’auto su un percorso eccezionale, che lo porterà dalla steppa al deserto del Kasakstan, dalla Ucraina agli Urali”<sup>125</sup>

It is also interesting to compare the figure of interpreter that worked with screenwriters, whom Daneliya mentioned almost as his friends, while Sonogo accused him in spying:

Il film avrebbe dovuto chiamarsi appunto Il barattolo di colla. Lo sceneggiatore italiano era stato affidato ad un interprete, in realtà una spia, perennemente sbronzo. Insieme girellano tre giorni per Mosca alla ricerca del compare dell’amico di un nipote, il quale a sua volta conosce un tale in grado di rimediare il barattolo di colla.<sup>126</sup>

### ***Unbelievable Adventures of Italians in Russia/ Una matta, matta, matta corsa in Russia/ Neveroyatnye priklyucheniya italiantsev v Rossii 1974***

Initial project of the film was called “Spaghetti alla russa” (Spaghetti Russian Style) and was delayed since the times of the scandal with co-production of “Sunflowers”. Unlike “Alberto and Masha”, this film was finally realized, though

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<sup>125</sup> Sordi farà “Un italiano in Russia”, in *L’Unità*, 24 luglio 1971

<sup>126</sup> Sanguineti T. *Il cervello di Alberto Sordi: Rodolfo Sonogo e il suo cinema*. Adelphi edizioni s.p.a., Milano, 2015. P.456

the scenario was waiting for about three years to be accepted. There is also another version appeared recently in Russian sources saying that the film was realized after the years of waiting only because De Laurentiis after “Waterloo” was a debtor of Mosfilm studios, and another collaboration was a good reason to solve the problem.<sup>127</sup> De Laurentiis liked the screenplay proposed initially by the Soviet side (Emil Braginsky and Eldar Ryazanov), especially he liked the participation of a real lion in the scenes, but asked to insert more pursuits. The film came out to be a comedy-adventure in the genre of buffoonery, full of stunts.

The set initially took place in Yaroslavl, but when it was decided to bring back to life the project, the film set moved to Leningrad. Several scenes were shot in Rome and Naples. Film directors were Soviet Eldar Ryazanov and Italian Franco Prosperi, and the cast was evidently half-Soviet and half-Italian, too. Producers that time were again brothers De Laurentiis, who were already specialized in Italian-Soviet co-productions.

The film was a success in the USSR with more than 50 million tickets sold and was the fourth film of the year, but it was not the same in the foreign box offices.

The film by Ryazanov, after there was some negative experience in Italian-Soviet collaboration field, had to prove that the relations were put right again and other co-productions continued later in:

- Life Is Beautiful/La vita è bella/ Zhizn prekrasna (by Grigory Chukhrai) 1980
- Nostalgia (by Andrei Tarkovsky) 1983
- Voyage in Time/ Tempo di viaggio/ Vremya puteshestviya (by Andrei Tarkovsky and Tonino Guerra) 1983 doc.
- Dark Eyes/ Oci ciornie/ Ochi chiornye (by Nikita Mikhalkov) 1987
- Lion with the Grey Beard/ Lev s sedoy borodoy ( by Andrey Khrzhanovsky)

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<sup>127</sup> Murzina M. *Spaghetti po-russki. “Neveroyatnym priklyucheniyam italiyantsev...” – 40 let.* In *Argumenty i fakty*, n. 3, 15 January 2014  
[http://www.aif.ru/culture/movie/spagetti\\_po-russki\\_neveroyatnym\\_priklyucheniyam\\_italyancev\\_-\\_40\\_let](http://www.aif.ru/culture/movie/spagetti_po-russki_neveroyatnym_priklyucheniyam_italyancev_-_40_let)

1995

- Moscow Elegy/Elegia moscovita/ Moskovskaya elegiya (by Alexander Sokurov, 1987)

- White Holiday/ Belyi prazdnik (by Vladimir Naumov), 1994

- The Secret of Marcello/Taina Marchello (by Vladimir Naumov) 1997

- Long journey/ Dolgoe puteshestvie (by Andrey Khrzhanovsky, 1998)

## Chapter Four

### Distribution of the Soviet films in Italy

#### 4.1 Soviet cinema through circuits, cineclubs, cineforums, etc. in Italy

Soviet films arrived to Italy mainly through the Association Italia-URSS that was closely connected with the Communist Party in Italy, or to be more exact through the Italian Association for the cultural relations with the Soviet Union (l'Associazione italiana per i rapporti cultural con l'Unione Sovietica) that was responsible for Soviet cinema distribution in Italy. While American, French, etc. film arrived to Italy through the common means of distribution, the Soviet cinema seemed to be the interest only of the Italian communists and their supporters. The presence of the Soviet cinema on the Italian screen was too insignificant, and when even we look at the statistics, it is usually mentioned as "other countries". For example, here is the statistics of the cinema seasons 1954-1957<sup>128</sup>:

Nationality	Box office income and the number of films in brackets		
	1954-1955	1955-1956	1956-1957
America	8.700.538.000	9.361.169.000	8.836.425.000
Italy	(285)	(262)	(268)
France	3.995.193.000	2.897.154.000	3.004.293.000
Britain	(167)	(142)	(110)
Other countries	687.624.000 (42)	840.005.000 (36)	874.552.000 (40)
	316.624.000 (23)	440.901.000 (37)	536.845.000 (46)
	88.929.000 (26)	445.904.000 (37)	334.055.000 (49)

<sup>128</sup> Quaglietti L. *Il cinema italiano dopoguerra. Leggi produzione, distribuzione, esercizio/10° mostra internazionale del cinema nuovo*. Quaderno informativo. Pesaro, 12/19 settembre 1974. P.70

The distribution of the films not from the USA, Italy, France and Britain was commissioned to small film distributors, and was a fragmentary one. Those small film distributors were not able to impose such films and to earn money with them to ensure their regular and rational exploitation.

One of the reasons that it was very difficult to find a Soviet film in the movie theatres was that in Italy the cinema was not generally regulated by the state, as in the USSR, so, of course, the most popular and economically successful films were unbeatable at the market. Then, the other reason was a political character of the films that the USSR usually wanted to spread abroad. Those films, apart from the awarded at the international cinema festivals, usually were not of the artistic merit and were not interesting for the spectators, and the distributors clearly knew this.

Besides, Italian communists in the 1950s struggled for the Italian cinema<sup>129</sup>, so the struggle for the Soviet films was too improbable.

Usual Italian circuits and cineclubs that were numerous at that time in Italy, often chose the films by Andrei Tarkovsky for their programme.

Ecco un programma del Movie Club di Torino, del giugno-luglio-agosto 1976. Nel periodo estivo viene presentata la rassegna del cinema fantastico. In cartellone, film di Romero, Robert Young, Norman Jewison, Michael Powell, Terence Fisher, Mario Bava, Roger Corman, Brian De Palma, ma anche di Hitchcock, Tarkovkij, Polanski, Boorman.<sup>130</sup>

Main distributors of the Soviet films in Italy were: Euro International Film, Dino De Laurentiis Cinematografica, Italsider, and GDB. Italsider was a joint-stock company that had the largest industrial complex for steel producing in Europe. The main seats of Italsider in Italy were in Taranto, Genoa, Novi Ligure, Marghera, etc. Italsider founded its own club (circolo aziendale) that was responsible for

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<sup>129</sup> Consiglio D. *Il PCI e la costruzione di una cultura di massa. Letteratura, cinema e musica in Italia (1956-1964)*. Unicopli, 2006. P.210-211.

<sup>130</sup> Bioni C. *Gli anni affollati. La cultura cinematografica italiana (1970-1979)*. Roma, Carocci, 2009. P.186

organizing the cultural events for the workmen. The club arranged from time to time the screenings of the Russian cinema (as it was called by them). For example, in 1962 there was shown a cycle of the Soviet films of different period: from 1925 to 1961. The majority of the films shown were classical Soviet masterpieces (like “Battleship Potemkin” and “Alexandr Nevskij” by Sergei Eisenstein) or awarded at the international film festivals (“The Forty First” by Grigory Chukhray and “The Cranes Are Flying” by Mikhail Kalatozov).

Questo ciclo, appunto, si prefigge di riunire gli sparsi ricordi e di stimolare gli interessi magari vivi ma saltuari del medio spettatore nostrano, il quale, di tanto in tanto, ha occasione di vedere dei film russi, importanti secondo le sollecitazioni della moda, il capriccio del noleggiatore o una vittoria clamorosa ad un festival internazionale del cinema.[...] Dato che il numero dei film russi in circolazione sul mercato italiano di noleggio non è certo alto, l'unica soluzione possibile per favorire una curiosità meno disordinata e meno fugace era quella di riunire alcune opere in sé esemplari di quell'altissimo livello creativo che il cinema russo ha raggiunto nel periodo del cinema muto ed ha poi conservato a tratti, per merito di alcuni grandi creatori, negli anni del sonoro antecedente allo scoppio della seconda guerra mondiale.<sup>131</sup>

## 4.2 Soviet cinematographers at the Venice Film Festival

The first appearance of the Soviet cinema in Venice took place in 1932 when the Festival was founded itself. The Soviet cinematography that year was presented by “Putevka v zhizn” (*Road to Life*) of 1931 by Nikolaj Ekk that won award as the Best Director (though there were yet no official awards and audience referendum was conducted), and by “Zemlya” (*Earth*) of 1930 directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko. Next time in 1934 there was a special program of Russian cinema at

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<sup>131</sup> *Momenti del cinema russo*. Aa.vv. Italsider, 1962. P.2-3

the Venice Film Festival that was awarded as the best one, and two films were also marked by yet still non official prizes: “Cheljuskin” of 1934 by Jakov Poselskij and “Peterburgskaja noch” (*A Petersburg Night*) of 1934 by Vera Stroeva and Grigori Roshal. The other participating in the program films were “Groza” (*Thunderstorm*) by Vladimir Petrov, “Veselye rebyata” (*Jolly Fellows*, though translated for the Festival as *Moscow Laughs*) by Grigorij Aleksandrov, “Novyj Gulliver” (*The New Gulliver*) by Aleksandr Ptushko and “Okraina” (*Outskirts*) by Boris Barnet.

Next decade was marked by the absence of any Soviet picture, or to say generally of any cultural cooperation between the USSR and Italy, and the change of the situation became possible due to the international political situation and due to the foundation in 1944 in Rome of the Italian Association for the Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union (*L'Associazione italiana per i rapporti culturali con l'unione sovietica*) that began to cure, promote and organize events regarding Soviet culture.

So next time that Soviet films arrived to Venice was after World War II in 1946 when “Klyatva” (*The Vow*) by Mikhail Chiaureli received International Critics Award - Special Mention at the 7<sup>th</sup> Festival. It was a significant event as after the 1930s when Italy and the USSR politically took two opposite directions and it was no more possible to cooperate despite of the signed on September, 2 in 1933 in Rome the Friendship, Non-Aggression and Neutrality Pact (*Pacte d'amitié, de non-agression et de neutralité entre l'Italie et l'U.R.S.S.*)<sup>132</sup> broken by Italy in 1937 by joining the Anti-Comintern Pact. Besides, in 1935 Stalin founded Moscow International Film Festival so that two cinematographs became more divided and isolated. The importance of “Klyatva” was that the USSR returned to Venice (after the years of fascist influence at the Festival) with a picture of Stalin’s cult personality, of one of the bright examples of the Soviet Union propaganda, and it was approved by Western critics and spectators, though of course a negative reviews appeared also.

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<sup>132</sup> League of Nations Treaty Series, vol. 148, pp. 320-329 [http://biblio-  
archive.unog.ch/detail.aspx?ID=198011](http://biblio-<br/>archive.unog.ch/detail.aspx?ID=198011)

The director Michele Ciaureli has retained in a certain manner a historic film and not a film of a glorifying propaganda; at this point, of course, the whole question of intention if there is a minimum of artistic quality that would justify the general objective and the discourse about the argument.<sup>133</sup>

The plot is written by Pavlenko and Ciaureli: and the same Ciaureli presented in Venice with the Soviet delegation was the director of the film that sometimes appeared to be a great mass screening and sometimes was a not less great allegory enliven by the most evident and incisive episodes. The protagonist of Chelovani, an excellent actor, benefits his unique physical resemblance with his extraordinary character, also accompanied by a skillful make-up.<sup>134</sup>

Il termine “mito” è presente anche nel commento del critico Glauco Viazzi, il quale scorse nel film di Čiaureli un’opera in cui “il soggetto stesso si sviluppa come una “cavalcata storica”, tutto è visto in termini monumentali; quasi si trattasse di storia antica, ormai diventata mito e leggenda”.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> “Il regista Michele Ciaureli ha ritenuto in tal modo di fare un film storico e non un film di propaganda celebrativa; su questo punto naturalmente tutta questione d’intendersi, quando vi sia quel minimo di qualità artistiche che giustifichino un impegno del genere e un discorso sull’argomento”

Prosperi, G. *Musica per piccoli complessi e “Giuramento” film dedicato a Stalin*, in “Il Giornale d’Italia”, 19 settembre 1946 (Translated by the author)

<sup>134</sup> Il soggetto è dovuto al Pavlenko e al Ciaureli: e il Ciaureli stesso presente a Venezia con la delegazione sovietica, è stato il regista del film che appare talvolta come un’ampia visione corale, e talvolta come una non meno vasta allegoria, ravvivata da episodi più evidenti e incisivi. Protagonista il Chelovani, un ottimo attore, che si vale di una singolare rassomiglianza fisica con il suo eccezionale personaggio, ancora aiutata da una truccatura abbilissima. Gl.P., *Una biografia di Stalin*, in “La Nuova Stampa”, 18 settembre 1946 (Translated by the author)

<sup>135</sup> Viazzi, G. *URSS in Direzione della Mostra internazionale d’arte cinematografica di Venezia, Il film nel dopoguerra 1945-1949*, Bianco e Nero Editore, Roma 1949, p.104

In the report about a trip to the first Cannes Festival of a group of Soviet cinematographers with M. Kalatozov as a head in the same 1946 there was noted: though there was not a single communist in the Festival's jury and the local aristocratic public "didn't give any chance to think we could meet the admirers of the Soviet culture <...> every appearance of comrade Stalin (during the M. Chiaureli's "Klyatva" screening – Stykalin's note) was applauded both by the jury and by spectators in the cinema.<sup>136</sup>

Not only because the reach and the persuasiveness of cinema are incomparably greater than those of any other form of propaganda, but also and above all because the nature of the film image is different: imposing itself on our minds as rigorously as it superimposes itself, in a manner of speaking, on reality, cinema is an essence irrefutable, like Nature and History. A portrait of Pétain, of de Gaulle, or of Stalin can be removed just as quickly as it was hung—basically, it doesn't mean a thing, even if it takes up one thousand square feet. By contrast, an historical recreation on film of events concerning Stalin, above all an historical recreation centering on Stalin himself, is enough to define irrevocably this man's place and importance in the world and to establish conclusively his essence.<sup>137</sup>

Later in France the film was cut and the scenes depicting Georges Bonnet were removed in order not to provoke the French public.

Three years before the film was allowed by yet liberal censorship, but the police prefecture tried to demonstrate that the film was "dangerous to

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<sup>136</sup> Original quote: А в отчете о поездке группы советских кинематографистов во главе с М. Калатозовым на первый Каннский фестиваль в том же 1946 г. отмечалось: хотя в фестивальном жюри не было ни одного коммуниста и состав съехавшейся аристократической публики «не давал оснований предполагать, что в ее лице мы встретим почитателей советской культуры, <...> каждое появление тов. Сталина (при демонстрации фильма М. Чиаурели «Клятва» — А.С.) вызывало аплодисменты как жюри, так и зрительного зала.

Stykalin A.S. *Vengerskij istorik D. Sekfju o russkom natsionalnom chuvstve i sovetskom patriotisme (1946)*/ Istoricheskaja ekspertiza, n. 3(4) 2015, p.83 (Translated by the author)

<sup>137</sup> Andre Bazin. *The Myth of Stalin in the Soviet Cinema/ Bazin at Work: Major Essays and Reviews From the Forties and Fifties*, Routledge, USA, 1997

public order” and should have been withdrawn from the screen. (...) The film episodes, cut in vast spaces where we recognize the hand of the sculptor, remind of the large frescoes of that time when they were popular art (...).

But these qualities might offend the delicate amateurs of refined scholars and admirers of Orson Welles or bittersweet pastries of Preston Sturges. The future of cinema is not less in *The Vow* than in *Citizen Kane* or *Sullivan*, these exquisite rational films of the past. (...). The most beautiful images of *The Vow* are engraved in memory: they are monumental, elaborated and are quite different from the style of "reality". The script could be considered as a bit fragmentary one. But it covers a vast part of reality, twenty-two years of the Soviet life and this task was not easy. The outcome was completed anyway, the essential things were said with an undoubted power.<sup>138</sup>

In 1947 again the Soviet films came to the Venice Film Festival and got several prizes. The most notable work of that time was, perhaps, “Vesna” (*The Spring*) by Grigorij Aleksandrov that got the prize for the Best Original Screenplay written by the same Grigorij Aleksandrov with Moris Slobodskoj and Aleksandr Raskin.

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<sup>138</sup> Le film fut autorisé, il y a trois ans, par une censure alors libérale et la préfecture de police voudrait bien démontrer que ce film « trouble l'ordre public » et qu'il doit être retiré de l'écran (...). Les épisodes du film, taillés à larges pans où l'on reconnaît la main du sculpteur, évoquent plutôt les grandes fresques à l'époque où elles étaient art populaire (...).

Mais ces qualités ont toutes chances de déplaire aux délicats amateurs des raffinements érudits et pasticheurs d'Orson Welles ou des pâtisseries douces-amères de Preston Sturges. L'avenir du cinéma n'en est pas moins dans *Le Serment* bien plus que dans *Citizen Kane* ou *Sullivan*, ces subtils ratiocinements du passé. (...). Les fort belles images du *Serment* se gravent dans les mémoires : elles sont monumentales, très élaborées et fort éloignées du style des « actualités ». On peut estimer le scénario un peu fragmenté. Mais il fallait embrasser une immense réalité, vingt-deux ans de vie soviétique et la tâche n'était pas aisée. La réussite est pourtant complète, l'essentiel a toujours été dit et avec une puissance incontestable.

Sadoul, G. *Les Lettres françaises*, 8/12/1949

[http://www.kinoglaz.fr/u\\_fiche\\_film.php?lang=fr&num=3077](http://www.kinoglaz.fr/u_fiche_film.php?lang=fr&num=3077)

(Translated by the author)

It was also important that in Soviet delegation presenting the film in Italy there was Liubov Orlova, the protagonist and a Hollywood-like Soviet star. She was extremely popular in her country after the film “Vesiole rebyata” (*Jolly Fellows*), friend of Charlie Chaplin, she was loved by Stalin and adored by all the Soviet women who tried to copy her hairstyle or total look, so that the Soviet media wrote about ‘Orlova syndrome’. It was important to receive also an international fame for her and she managed to achieve the success.

Also in Italy Liubov Orlova has already a small group of admirers, consisted of those who had a chance to see her three faces of an actress, a dancer and a singer in *Moscow Laughs*, *The Circus* and *The Spring*, the latter shown last year in Venice with complimentary success presented by the actress and the director Gregorij Aleksandrov, one of the most important Soviet directors and also a husband of the same Orlova. (...) ...*The Spring*, the film of a new and original concept where she played double role of an actress and a scientist, gave her an opportunity to show completely her vast range of sources both as an actress and as a woman of exquisite femininity.<sup>139</sup>

It is impossible not to mention Liubov Orlova and her splendid interpretation of two female characters in *The Spring*: it’s not only because of her great and various activity of an actress that sings, dances, pirouettes and recites perfectly. It’s also because the actress knows how to perform two opposite characters, not only with the help of the make-up and the

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<sup>139</sup> Anche in Italia, Liubov Orlova ha già un piccolo gruppo di ammiratori,- composto da coloro che hanno avuto la possibilità di vederla, nella tripece veste di attrice, di ballerina e di cantante, in “Tutto il mondo ride”, “Il circo” e “Primavera”, quest’ultimo presentato l’anno scorso a Venezia con lusinghiero successo, présente l’attrice e il regista del film Gregorio Alexandrov uno dei più apprezzati registi sovietici, che è poi il marito della Orlova medesima. (...) ... “Primavera”, un film di nuova ed originale concezione che, nella duplice parte di attrice e scienzata, le ha permesso di manifestare nel modo più completo tutta la vasta gamma delle proprie risorse di attrice e di donna della squisita femminilità.  
Triplix. *Liubov Orlova attrice emerita dell’U.R.S.S.* in *Noi donne*, n. 26 del 8 agosto 1948

exterior, but with a slight and intimate presence, with the fleeting smile, the concealed expression, the restrained breath, the burst of laugh. .<sup>140</sup>

It is also curious that Russian sources mention Liubov Orlova as a winner of the Special Artistic Merits Award or simply Best Actress Award together with Ingrid Bergman, though English and Italian sources have no mention about the fact. Alexandrov mentioned it in his book “Epokha I kino” (*The Epoch and The Cinema*):

The film was awarded by the prize of the Festival, and the actress Liubov Petrovna Orlova who performed both characters of the professor Nikitina and the actress Shatrova shared the Best Actress of the Year Award with Ingrid Bergman.<sup>141</sup>

In the same book Aleksandrov also wrote that the atmosphere at the Festival was not so friendly towards the Soviet films. Venice was full of claquers who carried special keychains with whistles, and they were paid to enter the screening of Pudovkin’s “Admiral Nakhimov”, but thanks to the support of the Venice fabric workers they were stopped. Aleksandrov said that the day before the Soviet delegation visited some fabrics and made some friends there. Another episode happened before the screening of his “Vesna” (*The Spring*) at the Festival, when there was shown anti-Soviet propagandistic film first, and Aleksandrov called it a subornative and propagandistic campaign. He mentioned also one of the Italian

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<sup>140</sup> Nè si può tacere di Liubov Orlova e della sua stupenda interpretazione delle due parti femminili di «Primavera»: non si tratta della grande e varia attività di una attrice che canta, balla, piroetta e recita alla perfezione. Si tratta di una attrice che sa dare due caratteri opposti, solo con la truccatura ed il comportamento esteriore, ma con la presenza minuta, intima, col sorriso fuggevole, l'espressione dissimulata, il sospiro represso, lo scoppio di gioiosa ilarità  
Barbaro, U. *La gioiosa vita di un popolo in “Primavera” di Alexandrov*, in “L’Unità”, 9 settembre 1947

<sup>141</sup> Фильм был отмечен премией фестиваля, а исполнительница ролей профессора Никитиной и актрисы Шатровой Любовь Петровна Орлова разделила премию лучшей актрисы года с Ингрид Бергман.

G. Aleksandrov. *Epokha i kino*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1976 p.286

reviews where his film was called as a very realistic one for the fact that it took a long time to start the Soviet car “Pobeda”.<sup>142</sup>

Another significant achievement for the Soviet cinema at the 8th Venice Film Festival was the approval of Vsevolod Pudovkin’s “Admiral Nakhimov” filmed in 1946. Pudovkin’s historical-biographical work received the Award for the Best Mass Scenes and the Award for the Special Artistic Merits that went to the actor Aleksej Dikij. It probably was also actor’s extraordinary life, apart from his brilliant performance in the film, that made jury award him: Dikij was repressed during 1937-1941 after the collaboration with Dmitrij Shostakovich in opera “Katerina Izmailova”, which was criticized by Stalin. The actor was banned to work in Moscow and Leningrad after his release and remained in Omsk, in Siberia till 1944 when after performing Kutuzov in the Soviet propaganda film he was accepted and complimented by Stalin.

Other films participating in the program in Venice in 1947 were “Glinka” (*The Great Glinka*) by Lev Arnshtam and short films “Meteority” (*Meteorites*) by Pavel Klushantsev, two newsreel episodes “Nauka i tekhnika” (*Science and technique*) by David Jashin and Polina Petrova, “1-oje maja v Moskve” (*1<sup>st</sup> of May in Moscow*) by Fiodor Kisiliov and Lidija Stepanova, “Zimnij sport v Moskve” (*Winter sports in Moscow*) by Vladimir Suteev and Dmitrij Bogolepov. The last one got Special Mention by the jury of the Festival according to the Russian sources, when in Italian there is mentioned “1-oje maja v Moskve” (*1<sup>st</sup> of May in Moscow*) by Stepanova and Kisiliov.<sup>143</sup>

Next time the Soviet films came to Venice happened only in 1953, after the death of Stalin, so that in more than twenty years of the Festival the USSR participated only five times. As it was mentioned before, the first pause happened because of the fascist-communist contradictions between two countries and the war period. Despite of the Italia-URSS Association foundation and its activity towards strengthening the cultural cooperation, after 1947 the Cold War interfered in the

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<sup>142</sup>G. Aleksandrov. *Epokha i kino*, Politizdat, Moscow, 1976 p.286

<sup>143</sup> <http://asac.labiennale.org/it/passpres/cinema/ava-ricerca.php?scheda=2023&nuova=1&Sidopus=2023&ret=%2Fit%2Fpasspres%2Fcinema%2Fannali.php%3Fm%3D20%26c%3Dp>

relationship and both Italy's support of the US policy and a weak position of the Italian communists made the Soviet officials refuse to come to Venice.

Regarding the end of 1940s, the archives of Moscow showed how the upgoing Cold War and the Soviet persuasion to participate in a Festival that was favourable to the United States and distorted the image of the USSR abroad definitely influenced on the Kremlin's decision to decline the Venetian invitation, though the certain decision was made beforehand when the left powers in Italy lost the elections on 18 of April, 1948.<sup>144</sup>

At the same time in the Soviet Union these years were also known as the policy of "malokartin'ja" (literally: the policy of *few films*) meaning that the government decided to produce less films but of a better quality, i.e. propaganda films with positive image of the country and the Soviet people. Also the strict censorial resolutions of 1946-1953 years made it almost impossible for the Soviet films to survive. The production was seriously taken down, according to the periodical "Iskusstvo kino", in 1944 there were 24 films produced in the USSR, in 1947 – 22, in 1950 – 11 and in 1951 only 8.<sup>145</sup>

If we compare a period of 1945-1954 in Italy and the USSR we'd see that while 800 films were produced in our country these years, in the USSR there were about 230.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Relativamente alla fine degli anni quaranta, gli archivi di Mosca hanno dimostrato come la guerra fredda montante e la certezza sovietica di partecipare a una manifestazione strutturata per favorire gli Stati Uniti e distorcere in senso negativo l'immagine dell'URSS all'estero abbiano influito in modo decisivo sulla scelta del Cremlino di declinare l'invito veneziano, sebbene tale decisione venne presa prima della sconfitta elettorale in Italia del fronte delle sinistre del 18 aprile 1948.

Pisu, S. *L'Unione Sovietica alla Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica di Venezia (1932-1953)*, p.12

<sup>145</sup> *Sovetskije khudozhestvennyje filmy (1930-1957)*. Annotirovannyj katalog, Moscow, 1961. Vol. 2.

<sup>146</sup> Se confrontiamo il decennio 1945-1954 in Italia e in URSS scopriamo che contro i circa 800 film prodotti nel nostro paese in queste stagioni, in URSS se ne contano circa 230  
Buttafava, G. *Il cinema russo e sovietico*, p. 93

These facts together with a political course of cultural isolation in the USSR and the Italian rapprochement with the United States could be the most obvious and influential reasons for the lack of the Soviet cinema in Italy these years.

In 1953 when the Soviet films were back to Venice the Silver Lion went to “Sadko” of 1952 by Aleksandr Ptushko, and it was the only award for the USSR, though not so many films were presented that year. There were only two other full-length films: “Rimskij-Korsakov” by Grigorij Roshal and Gennadij Kazanskij and “Vozvraschenije Vasilija Bortnikova” (*The Return of Vasilij Bortnikov*) by Vsevolod Pudovkin.

Un'altra atmosfera, come vedete. Chi, gli anni scorsi, avrebbe potuto soltanto pensare ad un'eventualità come quella che stava per verificarsi con il cinema americano? Non c'è dubbio: il merito di questo cambiamento spetta all'Unione Sovietica. Senza la sua partecipazione, quella di quest'anno sarebbe stato una copia, in peggio, delle edizioni degli anni precedenti: una monotona e tediosa rassegna di film uguali l'uno all'altro come gocce d'acqua. La partecipazione sovietica a ridato alla Mostra la sua perduta dignità, la sua dimenticata serietà. Lo ammettono tutti, seppure ad alcuni costi una certa fatica, perchè spiace loro di dover riconoscere che quanti, negli ultimi sette anni si sono battuti in favore di questa semplice verità avevano ragione.

[...] ”Sadko” è una leggenda popolare. L'ha diretto uno specialista, Alexander Ptuscko, che è qui a Venezia insieme alle attrici Natalia Medvedeva, Lilia Gritsenko, Alla Larionova, l'attore Grigori Belov e il signor Nikolaj Semionov, capo della delegazione. [...] Alcune indiscrezioni attribuiscono a “Sadko” una grande importanza.<sup>147</sup>

The Mosfilm transcription of a work best known here for "Song of India" in concert (and, lest we forget, swing) format marks that country's boldest, most ambitious musical venture to date. As well-rounded entertainment,

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<sup>147</sup> Quaglietti, L. *Dato il via al festival in Noi donne*, 30 agosto 1953

some spectators may prefer one of several tidier predecessors at the Stanley Theatre, the scene of Artkino's classical field-day during the last eight months. But from a stand- point of size, decor, costumes and plain gumption, this time the Soviets really have rolled out the barrel.

[...] A huge cast, headed by Serge Stolyarov, enacts an almost incredibly picturesque odyssey in imaginative, eye-popping settings, lushly underscored by the sound track, that alone are worth the admission price.

These include the massive barbarism of the port of Novgorod on the jewel-like Lake Ilmen, a fabulous Indian walled city yielding a horde of Hindus, elephants and, in an evil maharajah's palace, the reasured fowl and the azure iridescence of a jolly subterranean kingdom where the shipwrecked Sadko finds consolation with a decorative princess.

However, with all due respect to the dazzling opulence, beauty waxes increasingly cumbersome. For one thing, while the hero originally craved personal wealth only to find the grass greener, this version allots him a heavy-handed obsession for enriching the home town masses. The florid, redundant oratory of these scenes, and indeed the erratic continuity in general are sorely needful of some shearing and lubrication by a battery of slick Hollywood technicians.

Furthermore, Director Alexander Ptushko keeps his actors, particularly the handsome Mr. Stolyarov, literally shouting and gesticulating to beat the band, on the same expansive scale as the backgrounds, with few lighter shadings of fairytale intimacy.

The ethereal nub of the text, when the gorgeous head of the captive phoenix (attributed to a lady named L. Vertinskaya), perched beneath an exquisitely tinted dome, hypnotizes the hero with her common-sensical murmuring about man's eternal quest for happiness, barely misses being farcical.

Although neither the trimmest nor the most persuasive of the current Soviet musical parade, "Sadko" remains, nevertheless, truly a sight for anybody's tired or rested eyes.<sup>148</sup>

"Sadko" was a real success even abroad, for example, the United States bought it for distribution in 1962 when Roger Corman noticed it, renamed (*The Magic Voyage of Sindbad*) and asked a young Francis Ford Coppola to adopt the script. In Venice "Sadko"'s director Ptushko presented for the first time in the Soviet delegation, though the Venetian public had already seen his work "Novyi Gulliver" (*New Gulliver*) in 1934.

The other Soviet films participating at the 14<sup>th</sup> Venice Film Festival were: animation films "Volshebnyj mgazine" (*Magic store*) by Leonid Amalrik and Vladimir Polkovnikov and "Krashenyj lis" (*Coloured Fox*) by Alexander Ivanov, short film "Schastlivoie detstvo" (Happy Childhood) by Tamara Lavrova and a documentary "V Nikitskom botanicheskom sadu" (In The Nikitskij Botanical Garden) by Yuriy Ozerov.

Next year 1954 the USSR didn't participate in the Festival and turned back to Lido in 1955 winning the Silver Lion again with "Poprygun'ja" (*The Grasshopper*)<sup>149</sup> by Samson Samsonov. The film based on the same title short story by Anton Chekhov got also the Pasinetti Award<sup>150</sup>.

In its time the Festival was considered as a minor one: not so bad but not able to arouse the passion. It was *The Grasshopper* to make a good impression, the debut work by Samson Samsonov inspired by the same titled story by Chekhov, a film that made everybody agree and that almost won the Gold Lion if not found on its way a "sacred monster" as Dreyer, of course, whose film to tell the truth, if to exclude immediate admiration

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<sup>148</sup> H.H.T. *The Screen in Review*; 'Sadko,' an Opulent Version of Rimsky-Korsakoff's Opera, Is New Feature at the Stanley in New York Times, June 1, 1953

<sup>149</sup> The film was distributed in Italy by the Manderfilm

<sup>150</sup> Cosulich, C. *Dreyer/Rivista del cinematografo*, September 2005, № 9, p.28

of two exceptional envoys like Truffaut and Rohmer, at the moment had not had a great success.<sup>151</sup>

(...) Moreover, even an authoritative person like Luigi Chiarini reporting in the Cinema Nuovo did not hesitate to write that to win the main prize would be rather the debut work by Samsonov, that started the period of the Thaw in the USSR, and was satisfied with the decision about the Pasinetti Award that presented journalists had given to *The Grasshopper* and with the debates between Italian and foreign critics held on the Radio Losanna, when all of them were agree that Dreyer deserved more a lifetime achievement award.<sup>152</sup>

1956 was successful in Venice for the Soviet children films as they got two awards: Premio per il miglior film ricreativo per ragazzi dagli 8 ai 12 anni and Premio per il miglior film ricreativo per ragazzi dai 13 ai 16 anni. The first awards won animated 21-minut colour film “V yarange gorit ogon” (*Il fuoco nella "jaranga"*) by Olga Khodataleva that was shown in the section - Mostra Internazionale del Film per Ragazzi. Then later in 1969 also in Venice the picture took part in the retrospective “Retrospettiva - Il Film Sovietico per Ragazzi”.

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<sup>151</sup> A suo tempo, fu considerata una Mostra in tono minore: non malvagia, ma incapace di accendere passioni. A fare bella figura fu soprattutto *La cicala*, opera prima di Samson Samsonov, ispirata all’omonimo racconto di Cechov, un film che mise d’accordo tutti e mancò poco non si portasse via il Leone d’Oro, se non avesse trovato sulla sua strada un “mostro sacro” come Dreyer, per l’appunto, il cui film per la verità, se si eccettua l’immediata ammirazione di due inviati d’eccezione, quali Truffaut e Rohmer, al momento non suscitò eccessivi entusiasmi. Cosulich, C. *Dreyer/Rivista del cinematografo*, September 2005, № 9, p.27

<sup>152</sup> Del resto, anche un’autorevole personalità, qual’era Luigi Chiarini, nello stendere il bilancio su Cinema Nuovo, non esitò a scrivere che, a meritare il massimo premio sarebbe stata piuttosto l’opera prima di Samsonov, che inaugurava in Urss la stagione del disgelo, confortato in tale giudizio dal Premio Pasinetti, che i giornalisti presenti avevano conferito a *La cicala*, e da un dibattito fra critici italiani e stranieri, tenuto per Radio Losanna, dove tutti erano d’accordo nel dire che Dreyer meritava tutt’al più un premio alla carriera. Cosulich, C. *Dreyer/Rivista del cinematografo*, September 2005, № 9, p.28

The second prize received a feature film “Seryy razboynik” (Il brigante grigio) by Boris Dolin in the same section - Mostra Internazionale del Film per Ragazzi.

Other participants of the 1956: Bessmertnji garnizon (La guarnigione immortale) by Zakhar Agranenko; Atomnaja energija dlja mirnyh celej (L'energia atomica per scopi di pace) by Dmitrij Bogolepov - Menzione per i film scientifici; cortometraggio L'azione biologica delle radiazioni ionizzanti sui micro-organismi by A.M. Kudriavzev - Segnalazione della Giuria; Zujozdy sluzhat ljudjam (Le stelle al servizio dell'uomo) by V.N. Nikolaj - Premio per il miglior film scientifico, Cortometraggio, Colore, 35 mm; Creatura celeste by Sergei Obratsov, Cortometraggio; Ori okeanis saidumloeba (Il segreto dei due oceani/Tajna dvjux okeanov) by Konstantine Pipinashvili Partecipazione in Mostra Internazionale del Film per Ragazzi; La fattoria delle pellicce by S.I. Rappaport, cortometraggio.

In 1957 another animated feature film from the USSR got an award as il miglior film ricreativo per ragazzi dagli 8 ai 13 anni for Snezhnaya koroleva (La regina di neve) by Lev Atamanov. Special jury's diploma (Diploma speciale per i film scientifici) got a scientific short film (19 min) by B. Sulin *V mire ul'trazvukov* (Nel mondo degli ultrasuoni)

Other participants:  
Malenki šego (Il piccolo sego) by Dmitri Babichenko, animated film, Cortometraggio, Colore, 12 minutes - Mostra Internazionale Film per Ragazzi and in 1969 Retrospectiva - Il Film Sovietico per Ragazzi; La scienza e la tecnica by I.Cistiakova, Cortometraggio; Aleksandr Dovzhenko in section Personale di Aleksandr Dovzhenko with two films - Aerograd (1935) and Zemlja/ La terra (1930), in 1974 in Venice these films also took part in the section - Cinema, città, avanguardia: 1919-1939.  
Proposte di nuovi film; Celkaš Ttschelkasch) by F. Filippow, mediometraggio, Bianco e Nero, 45 minuti, sonoro magnetico; Čestnoe slovo (Parola d'onore) by A. Merkelov in Mostra Internazionale Film per Ragazzi; I salmoni vanno verso la camčatka by A. Moissev, cortometraggio; Karnavalnaya noch (Notte di carnevale)

by Eldar Ryazanov, in 2006 this film was screened again in Venice in Storia Segreta del Cinema Russo; Nella terra delle montagne di fuoco by Nikolai Tikhonov, Cortometraggio; Barenzirkus (Il circo degli orsi) by E. Wermischeva - Diploma speciale per i film informativi e didattici per bambini fino a 7 anni, Cortometraggio, Bianco e Nero.

1958 – 10 years after Eisenstein's death were commemorated in the retrospective named after another silent movie star Erich von Stroheim (died in 1957) and it was screened Eisenstein's *Mexican project/¡Que viva México!*

Another award won by animated short film (Premio per i film destinati ai bambini fino a 7 anni) Koshkin dom (La casa della gatta) by Leonid Amalrik , that was also participant in 1969 in Retrospective - Il Film Sovietico per Ragazzi.

The second winner of the same award (Premio per i film destinati ai bambini fino a 7 anni ) was another Soviet animated feature film Družok (Amico) by Viktor Ejsymont .

Participants:

Pastuh (Il pastore) by I. Babič , Cortometraggio, 25 minuti -Diploma speciale per i cortometraggi a soggetto; Otaraant qvrivi (La vedova di otar/ Otarova vdová ) by Mikheil (I) Chiaureli; a documentary Priezhaite k nam v usbekistan (Venite con noi nell'usbekistan) by M. Kaiumov , Cortometraggio, Colore, 35 minuti; Volšebnaja noci (Una notte incantata) by Igor Novakov , Mediometrogaggio, Colore, sonoro magnetico;

Rasskaz moey materi (Il racconto di mia madre) by Yuli Jakovlevič Raizman; scientific short documentary Opticeski metod isucenija naprjazeni (Il metodo ottico dello studio delle sollecitazioni) by P. Šmidt.

In 1959 only two Soviet films were marked by Venetian jury:

The Soviet feature film *Zverovody* (Cacciatori di animali) by G. Nifonlov won - Todaro d'argento per il miglior film a soggetto per ragazzi da 13 a 18 anni – and short black and white film *Astronauti a quattro zampe* by Nikolai Tikhonov - Diploma per i film di divulgazione scientifica.

Grigory Alexandrov was commemorated in the Retrospective Venezia 1932-1939 where there was screened his film *Vesyolyye rebyata* (Allegra giovanotti/ Tutto il mondo ride).

That retrospective called “Venezia 1932-1939” collected a pleiad of the Soviet classic films. In 1959 there were shown to the spectators in Venice the best pictures of 1930s:

*Ivan* (1932) and *Zemlja* (La terra) (1930) by Aleksandr Dovzhenko; *Groza* (L'uragano) by Vladimir Petrov 1934; *Geroi Arktiki – Celjuskin* (gli eroi dell'artico – celjuskin) by Yakov Poselsky; *Tikhiy don* (Il placido Don) by Olga Preobrazhenskaya, Ivan Pravov; *Novyy Gulliver* (Il nuovo Gulliver) by Aleksandr Ptushko; *Pyshka* (Palla di sego) by Mikhail Romm; *Peterburgskaja noc* (Le notti di Pietroburgo) by Vera Strojeva, Grigori Roscial.

Other participants:

a short film for children *Pervaja skripka* (The First Violin) by Dmitri Babichenko;

short film *Tambu-Lambu* by V. Bickov – received Diploma speciale per i film a soggetto per ragazzi da 8 a 12 anni;

a documentary *Pavlovsky park* (Pavlovsk Park) by V. Grebniev; *Dvadtsaty vek* (XXth Century) by Sergei Gurov; short documentary film *Khudozhnik Andrei Rubliov* (Painter Andrei Rubliov) by A. Kustov; *Skoro budet dozhd'* (It Will Be Raining Soon) by Vladimir Polkovnikov – received Todaro di bronzo per i film didattici per bambini fino a 7 anni; *V tvoikh rukakh zhizn* (The Life Is In Your Hands) by Nikolaj Rozantsev.

1960

*Leningradskoie nebo* (The Sky of Leningrad) by Vladimir Vengerov;

*Leili i Madzhnun* (Layla and Majnun) by Tatyana Berezantseva, Gafor Valamat-Zade;

In the section 'Omaggio a Tre Maestri del Cinema' participated

*Ivan Groznyy II: Boyarsky zagovor* (Ivan the Terrible: Conspiracy of the Boyards) by Sergei M. Eisenstein

In the retrospective 'Futurismo nel Quadro dei Movimenti Artistici d'Avanguardia' there was screened *Aelita* by Yakov Aleksandrovič Protazanov.

1961

Premio speciale della Giuria (Special Jury Prize)

*Mir vkhodyashchemu* (Peace To Him Who Enters) by Aleksandr Alov, Vladimir Naumov

Other films that took part in the programme were:

*Chistoe nebo* (Clear Skies) by Grigori Chukhrai

*Moj drug Kolka* (My Friend Kolka) by Aleksandr Mitta, Aleksei Saltykov

*V 35 raz cherez ekvator* (35 Times Across the Equator) by Dimitrij Bogolepov

*Lyudi i zveri* (The Men and The Beasts) by Sergei Gerasimov

1962

Leone d'oro per il miglior film

*Ivanovo detstvo* (Ivan's Childhood) by Andrei Tarkovsky

Gran premio della Mostra dei film per ragazzi

*Dikaya sobaka Dingo* (Wild Dog Dingo) by Yuriy Karasik

Leone di San Marco per il miglior film ricreativo per la fanciullezza (1962)

*Malchik i golub'* (The Boy and The Dove)

by Andrei Konchalovsky, E. Ostashenko

*Murav'ishka – khvastunishka* (The Ant Boaster) by Vladimir Polkovnikov

*Bolshoe serdtse* (A Big Heart) by Marianna Semionova

a short colour film, 22 minutes

1963

Retrospective 'Esperienze nel Cinema Sovietico 1924-1939' where participated the films by Aleksandrov, Barnet, Donskoj, Dovzhenko, Dzigán, Eisenstein, Ermler, Gerasimov, Jutkevich, Kalatozov, Kuleshov, Pudovkin and etc.

*Bolshaya doroga* (High Road) by Yuri Ozerov;

Premio speciale della Giuria received

*Vstupljenije* (Introduction to Life) by Igor Talankin;

*Est' v okeane zemlja* (There Is a Land in the Ocean) by Gaidanim;

The award 'Osella di bronzo per i film per l'infanzia a carattere ricreativo' was given to:

*Barankin, bud' chelovekom* (Be a Man, Barankin) by G. Kruglikov;

Another award 'Leone di San Marco per il miglior film per la fanciullezza' got *Slepaja ptitsa* (The Blind Bird) by Boris Dolin;

Mostra Internazionale del Film per Ragazzi

*Deti Pamira* (Children of Pamirs) by Vladimir Motyl

*Na grani dvuh mirov* (On the Border of Two Worlds) by G. Brusse

1964

Premio speciale della Giuria (1964)

*HAMLET* by Grigorij Kozincev

*Zhivot takoy paren'* (There is Such a Lad) by Vasili Shukshin

1965

Premio speciale della Giuria (1965)

*Mne dvadtsat let* (I Am Twenty) by Marlen Khutsiyev;

*Voyna i mir* (War and Peace) by Sergei Bondarchuk;

Gran Premio Leone di San Marco (1965)

*Morozko* (Jack Frost) by Aleksandr Rou

*Polikuska* by Aleksandr Sanin

The film that participated in the retrospective 'Opere Uniche di Scrittori e Artisti'

*Vernost'* (Fidelity) by Pavel Todorovskij

Premio Leone di San Marco per il miglior documentario

*Zacharovannye ostrova* (Enchanted Islands) by Aleksandr Zguridi

1966

The award 'Coppa Volpi per la migliore interpretazione femminile' received

Natalya Arinbasarova for the film

*Pervyy uchitel'* (The First Teacher) by Andrei Konchalovsky;

Another award 'Gran Premio Leone di San Marco' received

*Zvonjat, otkrojte dver'* (They're Calling, Open the Door) by Aleksandr Mitta

*Udivitel'naja istorija, pohozhaja na skazku* (An Amazing Story, Like a Fairy Tale)  
by Boris Dolin

*Vulkany zovut* (The Volcanoes Are Calling) by Vladlen Troshkin, documentary

*Pered pryzhkom v kosmos* (Before Jumping into Space) by Vladimir Kapitanovsky, documentary

1969

Seeing the success and numerous awards of the Soviet films for children, it was even made the retrospective at the Festival: *Retrospektiva - Il Film Sovietico per Ragazzi* that included following films (already participated in the Festival):

*Barankin, bud' chelovekom* (1963), *Barenzirkus* (1957), *Chuk i Ghek* (1953), *Dikaya sobaka dingo* (1962), *Dva druga* (1955), *Kak rybka chut' ne utonula* (1931), *Koshkin dom* (1958), *Malchik i golub* (1962), *Malenki Shego* (1957), *Na grani dvuh mirov* (1962), *Neobyknovennyj match* (1955), *Snezhnaya Koroleva* (1957), *Tigrolovi* (1955), *Volshebnaia palochka* (1955), *V yarange gorit ogon* (1956), *Zhivet takoj paren* (1964), *Zvonjat, otkrojte dver'* (1966)

Another films participating at the festival that year:

*Kaleidoscop '68* (Kaleidoscope '68 ) by Lev Atamanov;

*Staraya, staraya skazka* (Old, Old Fairy Tale) by Nadezhda Kosheverova;

*Muzhskoi razgovor* (Men's Talk) by Igor Satrov

*Dnevnye zviozdy* (Daytime Stars) by Igor Talankin

*Zhivoj trup* (The Living Corpse) by Vladimir Terent'ev

*Syuzhet dlya nebolshogo rasskaza* (Subject For a Short Story) by Sergei Yutkevich (France/USSR)

1970

Only one Soviet film was screened in Venice programme that year:

*Pretyplenie i nakazanie* (Crime and Punishment) by Lev Kulidzhanov

1971

Again only one picture arrived from the USSR in Venice:

*Nachalo* (Beginning) by Gleb Panfilov

1972

There was organized a Soviet Film Fay - Giornata del film sovietico (3 film)

*A zori zdes tikhie* (The Dawns Here Are Quiet) by Stanislav Rostotsky

*Nevetska* (Daughter-in-law) by Khodzha Kuli Narliyev

*TI I JA* (You and Me) by Larisa Sceptitko

*Akh uzh eta Nastja!* (Oh, That Nastya!) by Yuri Pobedonoszev

Mostra Internazionale del Film Documentario e del Cortometraggio:

*Konets Sankt-Peterburga* (The End of Saint Petersburg) by Vsevolod Pudovkin (1927);

*Zhivoj Lenin* (Lenin Is Alive) by Mikhail Romm, M. Savruskij;

*Nash Marsh* (Our March) by J. Varshavskij, A. Shejn, A. Svetlov;

*Druzhiba narodov* (Friendship of People) by E. Vermischeva

1973

That year there was a section 'Cinema, città, avanguardia: 1919-1939' at the Festival where Soviet films participated:

*Bezhin lug* (Bezhin Meadow) by Sergei Eisenstein (1937)

*Novyy Vavilon* (New Babylon) by Grigorij Kozincev (1929)

*Neobychainye priklyucheniya mistera Vesta v strane Bolshevikov* (The Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks) by Lev Kuleshov (1924)

*Aerograd* by Aleksandr Dovzhenko (1935)

As it can be easily seen three decenneries of the participation of the Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival were not similar: in 1950s (starting from 1953) not numerous films arrived, but nevertheless got some awards and the first attention from critics and public; 1960s brought the largest amount of the Soviet films to Venice and got the most number of awards, including the main prize – Golden Lion; in 1970s the films were much fewer and there was more attention to the previous epochs' cinema through retrospectives and special sections.

### *Moscow International Film Festival*

To compare and to understand better the cinematographic collaboration between two countries, it is worth of seeing what happened the same time at the most important Soviet Film Festival in Moscow, and how Italy was presented there.

According to the calculations made, Italian films were awarded more than any other foreign films, and the presence of Italian movie stars, including not only actors and actresses, but directors, critics and screenwriters, was rather regular at the Festival and at its jury.

1959

Italy - 1 film (in cooperation with France)

*India* (R. Rossellini)

Other participants:

The Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSR) – 1 film (Gold medal)

The Hungarian People's Republic (HPR) – 1

Lebanon – 1

The USA – 1

Finland – 1

The Federal Republic of Germany (Germany) – 2 (1 in cooperation with Denmark) (Gold medal)

Denmark – 1 (in cooperation with Germany)

India – 1

The Socialist Republic of Romania (SRR) – 1

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) – 1

The United Arab Republic (UAR) – 1

Pakistan – 1 (in cooperation with Great Britain) (Gold Medal)

Great Britain – 2 (1 in cooperation with Pakistan) (Gold medal with Pakistan)

Mexico – 1

Japan – 1 (diploma)

Austria – 1

The People's Republic of China (PRC) – 1

Brazil – 1

The Polish People's Republic (PPR) – 1

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) – 1

Sweden – 1

The Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) -1

France – 2 (1 in cooperation with Italy) (diploma)

Iraq – 1

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) – 1

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) – 1

The USSR -1 (winner)

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania -1

The Netherlands – 1

1961

Italy – 1 film (in cooperation with France)

*Tutti a casa* (L. Comencini) – special golden award

Luchino Visconti – jury's member.

1963

Italy – 1 film (in cooperation with France)

*Otto e mezzo* (F. Fellini) – winner

*Le quattro giornate di Napoli* (N. Loy) – FIPRESCI award (the film was not in the programme of the Festival)

Sergio Amedei – jury's member.

1965

Italy – 3 films (all in cooperation)

*Matrimonio all'italiana* (V. De Sica) - in cooperation with France.

*Le ciel sur la tête* (Y. Ciampi) - in cooperation with France (Gold award).

*Le soldatesse* (V. Zurlini) - in cooperation with Germany/Yugoslavia/France (Special Golden prize)

Leonardo Fioravanti – jury's member.

Sofia Loren – Best actress prize (for *Matrimonio all'italiana*)

1967

Italy – 4 films (2 in cooperation with France, 1 in cooperation with France and Germany)

*Le voleur* (L. Malle) - in cooperation with France.

*Operazione San Gennaro* (D. Risi) – in cooperation with France and Germany (silver prize).

*L'occhio selvaggio* (P. Cavara)

*Un homme de trop* (C. Gavras) - in cooperation with France.

Leonardo Fioravanti – jury's member.

1969

Italy – 3 films (2 in cooperation with France, 1 in cooperation with Spain)

*Serafino* (P. Germi) – in cooperation with France (Golden prize).

*Playtime* (J. Tati) – in cooperation with France (silver prize).

*Simon Bolivar, il liberatore* (A. Blasetti) – in cooperation with Spain.

Alberto Sordi – jury's member.

1971

Italy – 3 films (1 in cooperation with Romania (SRR) and France, 1 in cooperation with France)

*Confessione di un commissario di polizia al procuratore della repubblica* (D. Damiani) – Golden prize.

*Mihai Viteazul* (S. Nicolaescu) – in cooperation with Romania (SRR) and France.

*Les assassins de l'ordre* (M. Carné) – in cooperation with France.

Giuliano Montaldo – jury's member.

1973

Italy – 2 films (1 in cooperation with France and Germany)

*Il delitto Matteotti* (F. Vancini) – special prize.

*L'attentat* (Y. Boisset) – in cooperation with France and Germany (silver prize).

Gina Lollobrigida – jury's member.

1975

Italy – 1 film

*C'eravamo tanto amati* (E. Scola) – Golden prize.

Sergio Amidei – jury's member.

1977

Italy – 1 film

*San Bibila ore 20: un delitto inutile* (C. Lizzani)

Valerio Zurlini – jury's member.

1979

Italy – 1 film (1 in cooperation with France)

*Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (F. Rosi) – in cooperation with France (Golden prize).

Cesare Zavattini - anniversary prize (60-year anniversary of Soviet cinema)

Giuseppe De Santis – jury’s member.

1981

Italy – 1 film

*Razza selvaggia* (P. Squitieri)

Gian Luigi Rondi – jury’s member.

1983

Italy – 1 film

*Lo so che tu sai che io so* (A. Sordi) – special honorary prize.

Cesare Zavattini – jury’s member.

1985

Italy – 1 film

*Scherzo del destino in agguato dietro l’angolo come un brigante da strada* (L. Wertmüller)

Giuseppe De Santis – jury’s member.

1987

Italy – 1 film

*Intervista* (F. Fellini) – Golden prize.

Gian Luigi Rondi – jury's member.

1989

Italy – 1 film

*Ladri di saponette* (M. Nichetti) – Golden prize (Gold Saint George).

Ibrahim Moussa – jury's member (represented Italy).

1991

Italy – 1 film (in cooperation with France)

*Verso sera* (F. Archibugi) – in cooperation with France.

Luigi Magni – jury's member.

1993

Italy – 3 films (1 in cooperation with France, 1 in cooperation with France, USA, Great Britain)

*Jona che vise nella balena* (R. Faenza) – in cooperation with France (Christian jury's prize)

*Gangsters* (M. Guglielmi)

*Chaplin* (R. Attenborough) - in cooperation with France, USA, Great Britain.

1995

Italy – 1 film

*Segreto di stato* (G. Ferrara)

Tonino Guerra – Honorary diploma.

Aurelio De Laurentiis – jury's member.

1997

Italy – 1 film

*Marianna Ucra* (R. Faenza)

Sofia Loren – special honorary prize.

1999

Italy – 2 films

*Ormai è fatta!* (E. Monteleone)

*Panni sporchi* (M. Monicelli)

Marco Bellocchio – honorary prize (on the occasion of *La balia* display)

Florestano Vancini – jury's member.

Total main prizes (till 2013):

USSR/Russia – 17

Italy – 10

France – 9

Japan – 5

USA, Spain - 4

Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic – 3

Great Britain, Germany, Cuba, Bulgaria – 2

Yugoslavia, DDR, Greece, Pakistan, Guinea, Senegal, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Vietnam, Peru, Switzerland, Turkey, Venezuela, Iran, Sweden, Belorussia – 1

Total main prizes (till 1991 incl.):

USSR/Russia – 13

Italy – 8

France – 6

Japan – 4

Hungary, Czech Republic – 3

USA, Germany, Cuba, Bulgaria, Spain, Poland – 2

Yugoslavia, DDR, Greece, Pakistan, Guinea, Senegal, Great Britain, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Vietnam, Peru, Switzerland - 1

## Chapter Five

### Chronology of Soviet cinema in Italy

#### 5.1 1945-1950s: “Informative” period

Summarizing all the main events in the post-war period of Soviet cinema in Italy, it is possible to say that this phase was the most contradictory and sometimes even conflicting: from the warming of relations to the boycott of the Venice Film festival, and then the construction of positive ties again. The first bilateral agreements also marked this period, though it was still too early for real collaboration on co-production. Festivals and periodicals aimed at increasing the Italian public’s awareness of Soviet cinema during these years, however, lead us to label this period “informative”.

1946: the first post-war presence of Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival (after 1934).

1947: Soviet films participate again at the Venice Film Festival (the last time until 1953).

October 1948: Festival of Russian cinema in Rome

30 October – 18 December 1949: Festival of Soviet cinema in Milan

1953-1955: Periodical “Cinema sovietico”

July of 1953: the commemoration of Vsevolod Pudovkin in Rome (screening of his film *Admiral Nakhimov* accompanied by the speech by Umberto Barbaro) and Russian sources also mention the screening of *The Return of Vasili Bortnikov* in Rome at the International Agricultural Film Festival (winning the “Golden Ear” award)

1953: the return of Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival

January 1954: Cinema Agreement between Italy and the USSR in Moscow (Accordo cinematografico tra l’Italia e URSS)

1955 – Soviet films in Venice after 2 years of absence  
 1956 – Cinematographic agreement between Italy and the USSR for commercial distribution of Soviet films in Italy; participation of Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival  
 1957: the launch of the review “Rassegna del cinema sovietico” (organized by Unitalia); participation of Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival  
 November 1957: A Week of Soviet films in Rome and Milan  
 1958: participation of Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival; the visit of Sergei Geramisov to Cinecittà  
 1959: participation of Soviet films at the Venice Film Festival (also in the section: Retrospettiva Venezia 1932-1939)

The difference between the late 1930s/early 1940s and the period starting in 1953 is rather marked: more events happened in the former and most of them were directed towards building bilateral relations. The reason for this change was Stalin’s death in 1953, which radically changed life in the USSR and its cultural policy.

## **5.2 Khrushchev Thaw and its Effect on Cinema**

From the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s, the Soviet Union went through a process of de-Stalinization, and laws around censorship relaxed whilst ties with other countries were developed. Cinema, in particular, saw significant change: from being a tool of propaganda it transformed into art, and Soviet films became famous abroad.

As the loosening of ideological control stimulated unprecedented economic growth, the annual production of films increased 10-15 times. By the late 1950s all the studios of the Soviet Union were releasing about hundred films a year, and by the mid-1960s the production stabilized at an average annual output of 150 films (Segida and Zemlianukhin 6). Mosfilm, the major studio of the country, was completely rebuilt and in the 1960s

Russia had one of the highest attendance rates per capita at movie theaters in the world.<sup>153</sup>

The films of that period won international awards; “The Cranes Are Flying” by Mikhail Kalatozov (Cannes) and “Ivan’s Childhood” by Andrei Tarkovsky (Venice) seemed to reinvigorate the USSR's cinematic scene and re-evoked the popularity fostered earlier by Eisenstein. Also the importance of the Union of Cinematographers grew, though, of course, still everything was under the Communist Party’s control. The Thaw did not mean freedom (under Khrushchev the anti-Pasternak campaign occurred, for example), both above mentioned films that had received success abroad were criticized in the Soviet Union, and as a result, “Ivan’s Childhood” was not given a mass screening in the USSR before it was awarded a Golden Lion. At the same time, it was the main contradiction of the Thaw – the artists were free to create, but were under the constant glare of the authorities, though almost no films were forbidden, blocked or postponed.

Soviet cinema had two main themes during this period: realism from one side, and a great interest in Russian and foreign literary classics from the other. The main film directors of the period were: Mikhail Romm, Mikhail Kalatozov, Fridrikh Ermler, Grigory Chukhrai, Marlen Khutsiev, Eldar Ryazanov, Georgy Daneliya, Gennady Shpalikov and etc.

Perhaps, it was the only period in the history of our country when the cinema did not come down to the level of the spectators, but made them improve instead. The films that were realized for the highly cultured people, were lately sent to the village cinemas. And there the ordinary people watched them with interest too and rose their level of culture. [...]

60s were not only the heyday of the Soviet cinema, there also arrived the foreign cult films to the screen. There were “Nights of Cabiria” and “La Strada” by Fellini, “Wild Strawberries” by Bergman, “Ashes and

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<sup>153</sup> Prokhorov A. *The Unknown New Wave: Soviet Cinema of the Sixties/ Springtime for Soviet Cinema.Re/Viewing the 1960s*. Booklet of the Russian Film Symposium, Pittsburgh, 2001. p.8

Diamonds” by Wajda, “A Husband for Anna” that was translated like “Lost Dreams”. Many of them became a real shock for the audience.

In 60s there also blossomed the national cinema studios. There worked Shepitko, Konchalovsky, Sakharov – they developed the national studios.<sup>154</sup>

The period of the Khrushchev Thaw in cinema did not receive significant attention until the early 2000s. This current study shall not focus primarily on this topic, but rather use it to compare the events happening between the USSR and Italy.

As already mentioned, another strategy of the Thaw was building bilateral relations, and cinema followed that line. In the 1950s there were two agreements signed between Soviet and Italian filmmakers (in 1954 and in 1956), which were fundamental for the future collaboration and co-production that would start in the 1960s. Besides, after the difficult period between Italian and Soviet cinematography during the early 1950s, it was a real “thaw” that brought to Italy the Soviet films that were hard to find at the cinema. The words of Gian Luigi Rondi, Italian film critic, screenwriter and film director, ex-director of the Venice Film Festival, in a 2007 interview prove it.<sup>155</sup> He mentioned that the first Soviet film he saw was in 1946 at the festival in Rome, and the next time was only in 1953 at the Venice Film Festival. Only in the 1950s did Soviet cinema really

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<sup>154</sup> Пожалуй, это был единственный период в истории нашей страны, когда кино не опускалось до уровня зрителей, а подтягивало зрителей до себя. Фильмы, которые снимались для высококультурных людей, потом отправлялись в деревенские кинотеатры. И там простые люди их тоже с интересом смотрели и повышали свой культурный уровень. [...]

Кроме расцвета советского кинематографа в 60-е годы, на экранах начали появляться и культовые зарубежные фильмы. Вышли «Ночи Кабирии» и «Дорога» Феллини, «Земляничная поляна» Бергмана, «Пепел и алмаз» Вайды, «Дайте мужа» Дзаккео, который у нас шел как «Утраченные грезы». Многие из них стали настоящим потрясением для зрителей. Расцвели в 60-е и национальные киностудии. Там начали работать Шепитко, Кончаловский, Сахаров – они и подняли национальные студии  
Dymarsky V. *Vremena Khrushcheva. V lyudyakh, fakyakh i mifakh*. AST, Moscow, 2011. P. 89

<sup>155</sup> Pisu, S. *L'Unione Sovietica alla Mostra internazionale d'arte cinematografica di Venezia (1932-1953)*. [Doctoral Thesis]. Università di Cagliari, 2008. p.266

begin to appear in Italy, and Italians became more aware of films from the East, analyzing and criticizing them, often without separating cinema and politics still.

*Nel 1953 muore Stalin, si apre l'era di Chruščev con la relativa apertura all'Occidente di cui lo stesso ritorno a Venezia è una prova evidente. Quale clima si respirava allora a Venezia dal punto di vista politico? il ritorno sovietico venne visto come il segnale del possibile inizio di una fase distensiva dei rapporti con l'Est?*

Devo dire che sul piano culturale tutti guardammo a questo cambiamento con molta simpatia. Io che poi amavo il cinema sovietico anche perché avevo già delle amicizie all'interno ero molto contento. Fui entusiasta quando circa dieci anni dopo il Leone d'oro fu assegnato a Tarkovsky.

*Percepiva che la critica italiana si basasse semplicemente sul valore estetico del film oppure anche qui si utilizzarono dei parametri ideologici decisivi sul giudizio?*

In quegli anni di guerra fredda, parliamo degli anni cinquanta, c'erano in molti rappresentanti di alcuni quotidiani politici dei preconcetti ideologici. È chiaro che il "Popolo" dava una valutazione e "L'Unità" una opposta. Purtroppo l'obiettività, il distacco dai contenuti non è sempre stato praticato all'interno della critica italiana.<sup>156</sup>

One of the main figures of the Khrushchev Thaw in Soviet cinema was Grigory Chukhrai, a film director who made his film famous abroad and who fostered positive relations with other countries, especially Italy. Being an official in the Soviet cinema world, he very often used his authority to solve the problems that political officials created. Chukhrai is still not very well known and studied in Western countries, so it seems necessary to include some of his biographical information in this current research work in order to better understand why he was such an influential person in Soviet cinematography.

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<sup>156</sup> Idem, p. 269

### **5.3 Grigory Chukhrai, international popularity of his films and building of Soviet-Italian relations**

Grigory Chukhrai was a Soviet director, screenwriter and a pedagogue of the VGIK (The Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography). His works earned the BAFTA Award for Best Film, the nomination for an Academy Award for Writing Original Screenplay, and several awards at the Cannes Film Festival. Chukhrai was a board member of Goskino (State Committee of Cinematography) for almost thirty years, heading up at the same time an experimental studio at the Mosfilm and also being a member of the board of directors of the Association “USSR-Italy”, “USSR-Hungary”. He was one of the few Soviet directors to become famous worldwide and to promote international film cooperation in the USSR.

Born in 1921 in Melitopol (now the Zaporozhskaja oblast of Ukraine), Chukhrai was of Ukrainian Jewish origin. When Grigory was three years old his parents Naum Rubanov and Klavdia Chukhrai divorced and he was brought up by his mother and stepfather Pavel Litvinenko, who was a head of kolkhoz. In 1935 his stepfather was sent to Moscow to study for three years, so Grigory moved there too and remained there till 1939 until he graduated from school. Then returned to his family before signing up to the army that same year. In 1941 when World War II began Grigory joined airborne forces and fought in the South, Stalingrad, Don and on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Ukrainian Fronts, and also took part in a “Dnipro Troopers” operation. During the War he was wounded three times and made several heroic feats, for which he was decorated afterwards. Chukhrai’s wartime experience deeply influenced him and his later films. Also being a war veteran in the USSR meant a lot, helping to progress one’s career, gain respect from party officials, and have the ‘right’ to make decisions that were sometimes against the Party’s line.

After the Second World War Grigory entered VGIK and studied at the course of prominent Soviet directors Mikhail Romm and Sergei Yutkevich. Graduated in 1953 he worked as a director’s assistant with different directors, including Romm himself during his work on the film “Admiral Ushakov”. Chukhrai lost his job at the Kiev film studio where he had already started to write and direct his own films

because of his public argument with the writer and scriptwriter Olexander Korniychuk. Chukhray did not criticize the film itself, written by Korniychuk, but the way it was produced, with its excessively long script (long enough for four series instead of one), its long casting process and generally its inefficient use of time. During a public discussion Chukhray faced the question: “Who are you to criticize the script?”<sup>157</sup>.

The public made a fuss.  
- Lets kick Chukhray from the Party! – proposed someone from the public.  
- I do agree! – I shouted trying to outvoice them.  
The surprised public became silent.  
- I do agree! If the film is finished in time then I am an intrigant and there is no place in the Party for me. But if the film is not shot so I was right to warn the Party. Why should I be excluded?  
I was not excluded from the Party that time – the question I mentioned was too serious. But I didn't participate in the shooting of the film anymore and they didn't give me other films to work on. I didn't have salary anymore.<sup>158</sup>

This was just one of the episodes that characterized Chukhray as a courageous and honest person, qualities he would need for future conflicts with the authorities when he became the one in charge.

Chukhray began to work freelance as a theatre critic, and the film at the Kiev studio was not brought to fruition at the end. The studio even invited Mikhail

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<sup>157</sup> Chukhray G. *Moja voina*. Algoritm: Moscow, 2001. p.28

<sup>158</sup> «Зал шумел.

- Гнать Чухрая из партии! - предложил кто-то из зала.

- Я согласен! - крикнул я, чтобы перекричать зал.

От неожиданности зал затих.

- Я согласен! Если фильм будет снят в срок, значит я интриган и в партии мне не место. Но если фильм не будет снят, значит, я правильно предупреждал партию. За что же меня исключать?

Из партии меня на сей раз не выгнали - слишком серьезным был поднятый мной вопрос. Но сняли с работы и других работ не предлагали. Зарплату я перестал получать.”

Chukhray G. *Moja voina*. Algoritm: Moscow, 2001. p.28

Romm to finish the job, but he refused as he didn't like the script and the production. But he took Chukhrai with him to the Mosfilm studios and presented him to its head, another famous film director, Ivan Pyryev. Chukhrai told Pyryev about his plans to shoot a new colour film based on Boris Lavrenyev's novel "Sorok pervyi" (*The Forty-First*), already filmed in 1927 by Yakov Protazanov. Pyryev approved his plan, and Chukhrai moved from the Kiev film studio to Mosfilm. And though he had already written his script, Chukhrai asked Pyryev for a professional and experienced screenwriter and chose Grigory Koltunov, who became an official and the only screenwriter for the film, and with whom Chukhrai had some strong contradictions. Even the hudsovet<sup>159</sup> (Artistic Council) of the Mosfilm didn't approve the film at first.

While G. Koltunov in his script rewrote almost all the dialogues from the novel and added many of his own, Chukhrai, to fight with the colloquialism and commonness, seriously cut the text and created the episodes filled with thoughts and feelings.<sup>160</sup>

The script was edited about six times and whilst hudsovet had many doubts before approving the film, Romm and Pyryev supported the young director, and convinced all the members to pass the film. Sergey Urusevsky was chosen as the cinematographer, the best cameraman of the Mosfilm at that time, who became famous worldwide after his works with Chukhrai and later with Mikhail Kalatozov (in *The Cranes Are Flying*, *The Unsent Letter* and *I Am Cuba*).

Chukhrai was one of the first and few Soviet directors who did not involve politics in his films and for whom human relations were the most important, which is why he was so well-accepted by critics in Europe and was often a guest at different international cultural events.

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<sup>159</sup> Hudsovet – in the USSR it was a group of appointed artists together with officials from the Communist Party that approved or didn't approve works and operas of art; edited, censored or banned them before they reach the public.

<sup>160</sup> «Если Г. Колтунов перенес в сценарий почти все диалоги рассказа и дописал много своих, то Чухрай, последовательно борясь с разговорностью и бытовщиной, предельно сокращает текст, импровизируя насыщенные мыслью и чувством игровые эпизоды.» Shneiderman I. *Grigory Chukhrai*. Iskusstvo, Moscow. 1965. p.88

French film director Marcel Blistène admired Chukray's film and wrote:

I was impressed by the fact that he does not set any didactic tasks, he does not try to prove anything but the greatness of love.<sup>161</sup>

The debut film “Sorok pervyi” (*The Forty-First*) was a success for Chukhray. In the Soviet Union it was seen by more than 25 million spectators<sup>162</sup>, making it the 10<sup>th</sup> most successful film in 1956. In Europe *The Forty-First* started its way in 1957 in France, screening at the X Cannes Film Festival, before being nominated for the Palme d'Or and winning the Special Jury prize for unanimity (à l'unanimité) for its original script, its human quality and its romantic grandeur” (pour son scénario original, sa qualité humaine et sa grandeur romanesque). Italian critics of that period, though, were not favourable at the festival for the Soviet film.

Come testimonianza di un clima perlomeno diverso, vale piuttosto il sovietico Sorok Pervyi (il quarantunesimo). Già con *La Cicala*, due anni fa a Venezia, si poteva notare un desiderio di nuovo nell'ultima leva dei registi sovietici, e lo confermava l'anno scorso *L'immortale guarnigione* di Agranenko; tuttavia l'esordio di Gregorij Ciukhrai sorprende per il suo ben definito distacco dai consueti schemi – in bene ed in male – del cinema sovietico. Sorok Pervyi non va sopravvalutato, è esempio di dignitosa produzione media ma non è, né credo si proponga d'essere, qualcosa di più d'un buon film d'avventure; è insomma il film che la cinematografia russa doveva ritenere il più adatto per Cannes, in vista d'un possibile sblocco nel mercato occidentale. [...]

Nei giovani registi russi dell'ultima leva s'avverte il rischio – forse ovvio, per reazione allo schema di prima – d'un ritorno “tout court” al romaniticismo, vale a dire alla vetta più alta, ma anche storicamente più superata, della cultura borghese dello scorso secolo. I motivi romantici che

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<sup>161</sup> «Я был поражен тем фактом, что он не ставит никаких дидактических целей, не старается доказать ничего, кроме величия любви»

*Sovetskij film*, 1957, 25 July

<sup>162</sup> Razzakov, F.. *Nashe Ljubimoe Kino - Tajnoe stanovitsja javnym*. Moscow: Algoritm, 2004. p. 45

nell'esordiente regista della *Cicala* restavano nell'ambito del gusto figurativo ma venivano contenuti e deviati dalle reminiscenze cecoviane, nel Ciukhrai di *Sorok Pervyi* esplodono in pieno.<sup>163</sup>

In Italy the film arrived the same year, 1957, distributed by Mirafilm and was the first to be shown during the Week of Soviet Films in Rome and Milan (with the collaboration of the Sovexportfilm). Of course, the official description of the film was positive and aimed to attract Italian spectators.

È lecito tuttavia affermare che, come primo film di un nuovo regista, *Il quarantunesimo* è già qualcosa di più, molto di più forse, di un esordio. [...]

Si può condividere insomma l'opinione di quella critica che ha visto nel film *Il quarantunesimo* l'inizio di una promettentissima carriera artistica.<sup>164</sup>

The first success made Chukhrai continue working and his next film *Ballad of a Soldier* ("Ballada o soldate") came out in 1959 and was again a great success in the USSR and in Europe. Chukhrai became a director that the Soviet Union wanted to 'export', and the rest of the world saw him as a non-propagandistic filmmaker. It was a chance to see another Russia, the Russia of real human beings and not of the communist udarniks. *Ballad of a Soldier* got even more awards than the debut film of Chukhrai, it was awarded:  
- in 1960:

- in Cannes, a Special jury prize (Prix de la Meilleure participation ex-aequo)
- at the San Francisco International Film Festival, the Golden Gate Award for Best Film and Best Director;

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<sup>163</sup> Laura, E.G. *Cannes '57: problemi della coscienza inquieta/ Bianco e nero*. Rassegna mensile di studi cinematografici. Numero 6, giugno 1957. p.48-49

<sup>164</sup> Grigori Ciukhrai. *Nota sugli autori del film/ La settimana del film sovietico in Italia*. Roma-Milano, novembre 1957. "La stampa moderna", Roma, p.10

- in 1961:
  - Bodil Awards for the Best European Film
- In 1962:
  - Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay
  - BAFTA Award for the Best Film and Best Foreign Actor nomination for Vladimir Ivashov

Russian sources mention more than a hundred awards and nominations for different international awards, and the film's prominence in the foreign press soon led to world fame for Chukhraj, and a greater status for Soviet cinema in general. Since then, the film "Ballad of a Soldier" has been included in almost every lineup for Soviet cinema festivals and retrospectives in Italy.

In effetti, il passo in più che Čuchraj qui compie rispetto ad altri cineasti a lui coevi è il rifiuto del procedimento di lirizzazione sia dell'ambiente che del conflitto, a favore di uno spostamento dell'oggetto filmico verso l'interiorità dei personaggi e delle loro esperienze, che non sono e non devono essere né eroiche né esemplari. Il tempo degli eroi della rivoluzione e dei martiri di guerra, nel 1959, è finalmente terminato. O quasi.<sup>165</sup>

At that time in the USSR Chukhraj had an unquestionable authority, even if his latter films were not successful, and his best director's works were made in the 1950s.

Quel che è più discutibile in Čuchraj non è la dilatazione di un motivo sentimentale, ma la sovrapposizione di una faticata ricerca di espressione poetica, tesa quasi a riscattare una presunta povertà di contenuto: su questa via Čuchraj è giunto, dopo *Sorok pervyj* (Il quarantunesimo, 1956) e *Ballada o soldate* (La ballata di un soldato, 1959), al quasi totale fallimento di *Čistoe nebo* (Cieli puliti, 1961), dove è evidente lo

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<sup>165</sup> Russo G. *Grigorij Naumovič Čuchraj* /Al riparo dal "Sole dell'avvenire"  
<http://www.kaiak-pj.it/images/PDF/cinema/percorsi/percorsi4.pdf>

strangolamento formalistico di un discorso comunque vivo, ma necessario solo nei modi semplici e patetici del primo Čuchraj. Ma esempi di virtuosismo imbelli e di piccolo psicologismo espressivistico erano presenti sia nel Quarantunesimo, che resta il suo miglior film (cfr. per esempio, le più che compiaciute movenze del racconto di Robinson e Venerdì), sia in maggior misura nella Ballata di un soldato (basti ricordare la sequenza di Aljoša inseguito dal tank con la macchina da presa che caprioleggia impazzita).<sup>166</sup>

In 1961 when Chukhrai directed a romance film, “Chistoe nebo” (*Clear Skies*), it was very well accepted in the Soviet Union but not by the international public, though this time the foreign audience cherished its strong anti-Stalin character (more than the artistic merit of the film).

*Clear Skies* was awarded a Grand Prix of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Moscow International Film Festival and was presented in Venice, and was widely discussed as a good example of the first Soviet film that spoke about the cult of Stalin in the USSR. It is curious that in the late 1970s the film was not very welcomed on the Soviet screen and on the TV in the USSR, because of the political situation that changed. The director himself did not highlight anti-Stalinism as the main idea of the film:

Il film, uscito nella scorsa primavera in tutta l’U.R.S.S., suscitò appassionate discussioni come non era mai accaduto. Per la prima volta veniva apertamente affrontato nel cinema il tema del culto della personalità. Grigori Ciukhrai, a cui fu chiesto che cosa avesse voluto dire col suo film, e se dovendo rifarlo alla luce delle conclusioni emerse dal 22° Congresso, avrebbe tolto o aggiunto qualche cosa, dichiarò: “La critica ha detto che ho girato un film rivolgendomi in particolare contro il culto della personalità. [...] I problemi del culto della personalità furono toccati solo nella misura richiesta dagli stessi personaggi nella loro storia d’amore. [...] Credo che lo rifarei completamente diverso, e questo anche indipendentemente dal Congresso. [...] Sono convinto che il cinema

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<sup>166</sup> Buttafava G. *Il giovane cinema sovietico* in Bianco e Nero, n. 11, 1966. P.6

sovietico sta attraversando un periodo complicato e difficile, un po' come tutto il Paese.”.<sup>167</sup>

Grigorij Čuchraj, il fortunato autore de *Il quarantunesimo* e de *La ballata di un soldato*, dirige un forte film antistalinista, sulle vicissitudini di un ex prigioniero dei nazisti tornato in patria dopo la Guerra e riguardato come un traditore, per essere ancora vivo. *Čistoe nebo* (*Cieli puliti*, 1961) è un manifesto dei chrusciovismo, probabilmente direttamente ispirato dal Cremlino: peccato che sia scritto e diretto come un “dramma eroico” staliniano.<sup>168</sup>

In 1963, Chukhraj proved himself as a courageous individual, willing to oppose Soviet authority in order to save the reputation of Soviet cinema.

Chukhraj was appointed President of the Jury at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Moscow International Film Festival and was central in resolving the scandal in which the Soviet authorities attempted to avoid awarding the Grand Prix to Fellini for his film “8 ½”, favoring instead the Soviet film “Znakomtes, Baluev!” (*Meet Baluev!*) by Victor Komissarjevski. As Chukhraj explained himself<sup>169</sup> he was chosen as President because he was already a world-renown director after his internationally-acclaimed “Ballada o soldate” (*Ballad of a Soldier*), as well as a Communist Party member. He, along with the majority of the international jury (including Stanley Kramer, Sergio Amidei, Jean Marais and etc), wanted to vote for Fellini, but the problem was that during the screening of “8 ½” Khrushchev fell asleep, so the controllers from the CPSU (the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) decided it was a sign and wanted Fellini to fail. So the next day all the mass media, curated by the Party, wrote only negative reviews about the Italian film. Though the Party officials understood that the jury was going to vote for Fellini, and that it was impossible to sway such a jury composed of world-leading figures from cinema, they nevertheless tried to impose their opinion on the

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<sup>167</sup> Dichiarazioni di Ciukhrai su “Cielo Pulito” in Cineforum , n. 10, dicembre 1961, p.570-571

<sup>168</sup> Buttafava G. *Il cinema russo e sovietico*. Marsilio, Biblioteca di Bianco&Nero – Saggistica, n.4, 2000. p.103

<sup>169</sup> Bednov, S. *Kak Fellini Khrushcheva okonfuzil (How Fellini embarrassed Khrushchev)* / interview with G.Chukhraj in *Trud*, n.113, 19 June 2004.

President, Chukhrai. Vasiliy Snastin, responsible for cultural questions in the Central Committee of the CPSU, summoned Chukhrai and then threatened to exclude him from the Party if “8 ½” was given the award. In defiance of this, Chukhrai responded by saying that his duty as a communist was to be honest and fair.

I remember that amazing act of Grigori Chukhrai when Fellini got the Grand Prix for the “8 ½” in 1963 at the MIFF (Moscow International Film Festival). That decision needed a great courage from the jury, but the film was also great. Fellini’s talent appeared to be stronger than the order of the Central Committee of the Party to award main prizes at the MIFF only to the Soviet films or, in worse cases, to the films from the socialist states.<sup>170</sup>

Sergio Amidei was furious about the situation and was going to leave the Festival; jury members from socialist countries came under pressure and did not want the award to go in Fellini’s favor; Dušan Vukotić from Yugoslavia, furthermore, accused the film of pedophilia, which subsequently led to Stanley Kramer’s departure from the jury. Chukhrai had to be a mediator between all the parties, and finally he found a way to award Fellini – he changed the official title of the Grand Prix to ‘Contribution to Cinema Award’ (contribution by the film).

Hereby we came every evening to Pera Moiseevna Atasheva, Eisenstein’s widow, who was working on the collected works of Eisenstein, and helped her. When suddenly in her apartment there appeared a man called Antonello Trombadori, a famous Italian film critic, hero of the anti-fascist resistance movement, member of the Italian (“revisionist”) communist party, the editor of the magazine “Rinascita”, and a friend of Visconti and Fellini. He came in a hurry to Moscow before the festival screening to defend Fellini - to prove to the party dogmatists that “8 ½” is not about

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<sup>170</sup> Я помню удивительный поступок Григория Чухрая, когда Феллини получил главную премию за «Восемь с половиной» в 1963 году на ММКФ. Это решение потребовало огромного мужества от жюри, но и картина была великая. Перед талантом Феллини не выдержала установка ЦК партии присуждать на ММКФ главные призы только советским картинам, а в худшем случае – фильмам, представленным странами соцлагеря. Alexandrova, A. *Ruka Fellini / Nikita Mikhalkov* (nowadays director of the MIFF) interview in *Vzglyad*, 22 June 2005.

individualism but about an honest and humanistic confession of the complexity of creativity. The fight between the supporters and the opponents of Fellini, as was discovered lately, was to the death, and not between the jury members, but at the “top”. Trombadori told us that “there” they have a group of Fellini’s rivals, but there were also his secret admirers. He was wondering how those people from the Central Committee could have seen “Dolce vita”: “as it was not distributed here, did they go abroad to see it?!” He could not know that when the film arrived for purchasing, it was copied and a special department of Goskino was distributing it between the officials’ villas, showing the film to all of those richies and their attendants.<sup>171</sup>

The international scandal was avoided with the help of Chukhray, and Soviet cinematography could be seen by Western countries as more connected with art than with the Party, at least in that concrete decision. Another important merit of Chukhray in building the independence of Soviet cinema from the Communist Party was an association he created under Mosfilm.

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<sup>171</sup> При этом каждый вечер приезжали к Пере Моисеевне Аташевой, вдове Эйзенштейна, которая тогда готовила собрание сочинений Эйзенштейна, а мы ей помогали. И вдруг в ее квартире появился человек по имени Антонелло Тромбадори, знаменитый итальянский кинокритик, герой антифашистского Сопротивления, член Итальянской (“ревизионистской”) компартии, редактор журнала *Rinascita*, друг Висконти и Феллини. Он примчался накануне конкурсного показа в Москву, чтобы защитить Феллини — доказать партийным догматикам, что “Восемь с половиной” — это никакой не индивидуализм, а честное и гуманистическое признание в сложности творчества. Битва сторонников и противников Феллини, как мы потом узнали, шла не на жизнь, а на смерть — не столько в жюри, сколько “наверху”. Тромбадори рассказывал, что “там” есть партия противников Феллини, но есть и тайные поклонники. Он тогда еще удивлялся, каким образом эти люди из ЦК видели “Сладкую жизнь”: “ее же не было у вас в прокате, неужели они все ездили за границу и смотрели там?!” Он не мог знать, что когда картину прислали на закупку, с нее сделали контратип, и особый отдел Госкино возил пиратскую копию по вельможным дачам, показывая всем этим бонзам и их приближенным

Borzenko, A. *Ne mogu peredat', kak my vse likovali (I cannot explain how glad we were)*: Naum Kleiman interview in *Kommersant*, 20 June 2014.

Naum Kleiman is a Russian cinema historian, film critic, filmmaker and actor, former manager of the Moscow State Central Museum (1992-2014); being specialist in Eisenstein he heads the Eisenstein-Centre in Moscow. As a jury member he took part at the Venice Film Festival in 1991 and at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Berlin International Film Festival in 1993. FIPRESCI laurate for his retrospective show “Unknown Soviet cinema” at the Moscow International Film Festival in 1987.

In 1965-1975 he headed the Experimental creative association – ETO (Eksperimental'noe tvorcheskoe ob'edinenie) that was part of the Mosfilm studios. The other name of the association was 'The Experimental studio of Chukhrai'. It was founded after the resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union in December 1965, and together with Chukhrai there was Vladimir Pozner to launch the experimental studio.

It was a unique and unusual experience in Soviet cinematography's history as there was a state unified system and it seemed rather impossible to have an association of that kind under the greatest and entirely government-controlled studios of Mosfilm. Later in the 1980s when Soviet cinematographers needed changes and experiments again and they began to rise against state cinema policy, they often referred to that experiment. The core of the experiment itself consisted of direct relations between the producing studio and the distributor, so now the financial situation of the studio and its artists wholly depended on the commercial success of their works, and the proceeds from the concrete films did not disappear in the whole studio budget.

Dopo l'informe e stanco apologo contemporaneo *Žily-bily starik so staruchoj* (C'erano una volta un vecchio e una vecchia, 1965), che nessuno capisce bene, del tutto spaesato in mezzo ai nuovi "testi" dei Tarkovskij e dei Klimov, Čuchrai decide di dedicarsi all'organizzazione di un gruppo di produzione sperimentale, pronto a promuovere i nuovi talenti e a permettere imprese difficili, non realizzabili dentro le strutture dei grandi studi; per esempio realizza *Načalo nevedomogo veka* (L'inizio di un secolo sconosciuto, 1967), un film a episodi tratto da scrittori "scomodi" restituiti dal nuovo corso a una faticata cittadinanza nel consesso letterario sovietico: Andrej Platonov, Jurij Oleša. A dirigere gli episodi Čuchrai chiama alcuni registi debuttanti o di recentissima fama, Larisa Šepit'ko (1938-1979), Andrej Smirnov (n.1941).<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Buttafava G. *Il cinema russo e sovietico*. Marsilio, Biblioteca di Bianco&Nero – Saggistica, n.4, 2000. p.103

Some cinema experts attribute the existence of such a kind of cinema market within the Mosfilm studios to the personality of Grigory Chukhrai, the war veteran and world-renown director. His international fame gave him much credit in the USSR as only few Soviet cinematographers were known abroad, while foreign cinema was extremely popular in the Soviet Union. The model of the cinema economy of the ETO was very effective, and the amount of films produced by the studio grew very fast as the cinematographers were free to experiment with genres, contributing to them receiving notably higher salaries than their counterparts in the rest of Mosfilm. This was the principal reason why the authorities decided to close down the studio in 1976. There were many important Soviet films produced by the ETO in this period, including: “Raba lyubvi” (*A Slave of Love*) by Nikita Mikhalkov, which won Best Director at the Tehran International Festival, and was shortlisted for best foreign film in 1978 by the National Board of Review, and also won 3<sup>rd</sup> best foreign film at both the Los Angeles Film critics association and the New York Film Critics Circle Awards; the film “Beloe solntse pustyni” (*The White Sun of the Desert*) by Vladimir Motyl’, which was one of the most popular Soviet films of all time<sup>173</sup>; the film “Ne goryui” (*Don’t Grieve*)<sup>174</sup> by Georgyi Danelia; the film “Tabor uhodit v

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<sup>173</sup> *The White Sun of the Desert* was seen by 34.5 million people in 1975 and was the tenth most popular film that year.

David Gillespie. *The Sounds of Music: Soundtrack and Song in Soviet Film /Slavic Review*. 62 (3). 2003. P. 477–478

<sup>174</sup> This film is not popular at all among the Italian public, but was highly appreciated by Federico Fellini, Daneliya himself told that Fellini believed its composition was an example of ideal film composition and awarded Daneliya at the festival in Rimini.

“Но есть один приз, который особенно дорог, которым горжусь. Его мне дали Тонино Гуэрра и Федерико Феллини. Он называется "Амаркорд", и я - единственный его обладатель. Здесь своя история. Когда наш великий режиссер Сергей Параджанов сидел в тюрьме, он делал медали из фольги от крышечек молочных бутылок. Одну такую он подарил Тонино Гуэрре, а тот отлил ее в серебре и принес как сувенир в больницу к Феллини. Феллини, как оказалось, несколько раз смотрел "Не горюй!", вот и сказал Гуэрре, чтобы меня наградили медалью за этот фильм”.

But there is one award that is very special to me, the one I am proud of. I received it from Tonino Guerra and Federico Fellini. It is called *Amarcord*, and I am its only owner. Here is the story. When our great director Sergei Parajanov was in prison, he was making medallions out from the foil of milk bottles lids. And one of them he gave to Tonino Guerra, who casted it in silver and brought it in the hospital to Fellini. It turned out that Fellini saw “Don’t Grieve” for several times, so he said to Guerra to award me with that medallion for the film.

Chuprinina, Y. *Ne Goryui*/interview with Danelia G. in *Itogi*, №34 (480) 19.08.2005

Тонино рассказал Феллини, какие фильмы участвуют в конкурсе фестиваля и кто из

nebo” (*Gypsies Are Found Near Heaven*, also known as *Queen of the Gypsies*) by Emil Loteanu, which had the highest distribution of 1976, having been seen by 64.9 million people, and had won the Golden Shell Prize at the San Sebastian International Film Festival as well as awards in Prague, Belgrade, and Paris (UNIATEC); and the films by Leonid Gaidai, “Ivan Vasil’evich menyaet professiyu” (*Ivan Vasilievich: Back to the Future*), another distribution leader in 1973 with more than 60 million viewers and “12 stol’ev” (*12 Chairs*).

Chukhrai’s works in the 1960s and 1970s were not as notable and successful as his first films and other cinematographic merits described above. He also started to take part in the managing of the Association URSS-Italia, and his good relations with Italian cinematographers led to a collaborative project with the film “Life is Beautiful” (*Zhizn’ prekrasna*), which was not received well either by himself or the public

Pochi gli altri suoi film, tra cui sono noti in Italia *C'erano una volta un vecchio e una vecchia* (1964, passato solo nei cineclub) e il discutibile *La vita è bella* (1979, con Giancarlo Giannini e Ornella Muti).<sup>175</sup>

### Soviet-Italian co-production: film *Life Is Beautiful*

“Zhizn’ prekrasna” (*Life is Beautiful*) is a romance drama film made in 1979 by an Italian-Soviet studio collaboration (Mosfilm and Quattro Cavalli Cinematografica, RAI), and directed by Grigory Chukhrai.

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режиссеров приехал. И Феллини предложил дать приз мне.

— Но ты же не видел фильм, который Дanelia привез, — сказал Гуэрра.

— И не надо. Я видел “Не горюй!”, и мне достаточно.

Таким образом я получил приз “Амаркорд” от Феллини за картину “Настя”, которую он не видел, но любил фильм “Не горюй!”, и от Параджанова за фильм “Не горюй!”, который ему не понравился.

Tonino told Fellini what film were participating in the festival programme and what directors arrived. And Fellini proposed to award me.

- But you didn’t even see the film that Danelia brought, - said Guerra.

- And I don’t need it. I saw “Don’t Grieve!”, and it is enough for me.

So, this is how I got “Amarcord” award from Fellini for the film “Nastya” that he did not see, but loved the film “Don’t Grieve!”, and from Parajanov, though he did not like “Don’t Grieve!”

Chukhrai G. *Bezbiletnyi passazhir. Amarcord / Chito-gvrito*. EKSMO: Moscow, 2006. p.396

<sup>175</sup> [http://www.cineforum.it/rubrica/L\\_altra\\_faccia\\_delle\\_lune/Un\\_regista\\_che\\_sciolse\\_il\\_ghiaccio](http://www.cineforum.it/rubrica/L_altra_faccia_delle_lune/Un_regista_che_sciolse_il_ghiaccio)

I was proposed to make a film. Italians arrived in Moscow and said:  
- We would like to shoot a progressive film. But we cannot get money in Italy for it, so we decided to propose you a collaboration to be half sponsored by the Soviet Union. And the director should be Chukhrai. It was very interesting for me, of course. That time Italians made very good films. I wanted to see how Italian cinema production was working. I agreed.

At first I insisted to be included in the screenwriters' team. I knew that according to our conditions it was impossible to change anything without a co-author.

When the script was almost ready, the leading actors Ornella Muti and Giancarlo Giannini suddenly said: "We will not do these and those episodes".

I was surprised:

- Why? You asked me to be the scriptwriter.  
- Read our contract, - they replied, - there is written we will not act if we do not like the cue.

What should I do? I decided to talk to our Minister of cinematography Ermash. I called him from Italy and said:

- I don't know what to do. I wrote the script and they ask for another!

And the reply was:

- Shoot what they say and turn back as soon as possible!..

Ermash was afraid because at that time the Minister was responsible if someone did not come back from abroad.

I understood I should solve it myself. I tried to struggle as I could, I was rewriting some things from the beginning.

Finally, we started the shooting. Once the producer came to me and said:

- You know, that episode and the other one we won't shoot.

I was surprised:

- Why?

- Because I got a message from our terrorists<sup>176</sup> that they would kill me if we do shoot these episodes.

- How come?.. – I said. – First of all there is nothing about the terrorists, and secondly, you approved the script!

- Yes...but... you know.. Do you want me to jump out of the window?!

- Don't begin this Italian stuff! – I replied.

I called Ermash again and explained him the situation. Ermash again told me:

- So shoot as they say and come back as soon as possible!

There was nothing to do, I agreed with that...

My film "The Life is Beautiful" is dear to me as all my other pictures.

There is nothing I should be ashamed of – neither artistically, nor morally.

Unfortunately, it had the same destiny as all the films in co-production – they are often worse than made in single production.

During the work each party tried to get benefits, and the director had to balance everything, trying at the same time, from his side, to realize his artistic aims. Usually, such a situation turns out to be a failure.

After I finished the film I gave myself a word not to participate in the film co-production anymore.<sup>177</sup>

[...]

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<sup>176</sup> The film is about terrorists and agents, presumably in Portugal, that fight against the dictatorship. Soviet annotation to the film did not name any country, while the foreign one did. The word 'terrorist' was used by Chukhrai in his book and translated accordingly, though it could have been another type of criminals.

<sup>177</sup> Мне предложили постановку. Итальянцы приехали в Москву и сказали: - Мы хотим снять прогрессивный фильм. Но в Италии нам на это денег не дают, поэтому мы решили предложить вам совместный проект, чтобы фильм наполовину финансировался в Советском Союзе. А режиссером пусть будет Чухрай.

Разумеется, для меня это было очень интересно. В то время итальянцы снимали очень хорошие фильмы. Мне захотелось понять, как работает итальянское кинопроизводство. Я согласился.

Первым делом я настоял, чтобы меня включили в соавторы сценария. По нашим условиям мне было известно, что без соавтора нельзя ничего изменять.

Когда сценарий был уже почти готов, исполнители главных ролей Орнелла Мутти и Джан Карло Джанини неожиданно сказали: "Вот в этом и в этом эпизодах мы сниматься не будем".

Я удивился:

## 5.4 1960s: “Collaborative” period

In the 1960s Soviet cinema was constantly presented at the Venice film festival, (except in 1967 and 1968), and during that decade films from the USSR received more awards in Venice than in any other decade before or after, and it’s also worth mentioning that a Soviet film, “Ivan’s Childhood” by Tarkovsky, won a Golden Lion for the first time in 1962. Comparing the success of Soviet cinema in Italy between the 1950s and 1960s, it is clear that the latter was a much more fruitful and collaborative period.

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- Почему?.. Вы же сами просили, чтобы я был сценаристом.  
- Почитайте наш договор,- ответили они мне,- там сказано, что, если нам не нравятся какие-то реплики, мы их произносить не будем.  
Что делать? Решаю обратиться к нашему министру кинематографии Ермашу.  
Звоню ему из Италии и говорю:  
- Я не знаю, как мне быть. Я написал сценарий, а они требуют другой!  
Слышу в ответ:  
- Да снимай, что они скажут, только скорее возвращайся!..  
Ермаш в это время очень боялся: тогда, в случае если кто-нибудь не возвращался из-за границы, виноватым считался министр.  
Я понял: придется выходить из положения самому. В меру возможностей стал бороться, а какие-то вещи переписывать заново.

Наконец, мы начали снимать. Однажды ко мне приходит продюсер и говорит:  
- Знаешь что, вот этот, этот и этот эпизод мы снимать не будем.  
Я удивляюсь:  
- Почему?  
- Потому что я получил сейчас от наших террористов записку о том, что они меня прикончат, если мы снимем такие эпизоды!  
- Как же так!..- говорю я.- Во-первых, там ничего нет про террористов, а во-вторых, ты же сам согласился на этот сценарий!  
- Да... ну... понимаешь... Хочешь, я сейчас выброшусь из окна?!  
- Не устраивай мне этих итальянских штук! - отвечаю я.  
Опять звоню Ермашу: так и так. Ермаш снова говорит:  
- Да снимай все, что они там скажут, только скорее приезжай!  
Делать нечего, соглашаюсь и с этим...  
Мой фильм "Жизнь прекрасна" дорог мне, как все мои картины. В нем нет ничего, за что мне было бы стыдно, - и с художественной и с моральной точки зрения. Но, к сожалению, его постигла беда большинства совместных фильмов - чаще всего они всегда были хуже совместных. Во время работы происходила типичная ситуация: каждая сторона тянула одеяло на себя, а режиссер должен был как-то удерживать равновесие, стараясь при этом, с третьей стороны, решить еще и свои творческие задачи. Как правило, такая ситуация оборачивалась неудачей.  
Закончив этот фильм, я дал себе слово: больше в совместных постановках я не участвую  
Chukhrai G. *Moja voina*. Algoritm: Moscow, 2001. p. 56-57

1960: the USSR participated at the Mostra internazionale del cinema libero in Porretta Terme with “Other People’s Children” (*Chuzhie deti*) by Abuladze

1961: the first meeting of Italian and Soviet filmmakers in Rome

1962: Italian-Soviet convention “Cinema and Society” in Rome

1963: Soviet Film Week in Italy; retrospective ‘Experiments in the Soviet Cinema 1924-1939’ (Retrospectiva Esperienze nel Cinema Sovietico 1924-1939) at the Venice Film Festival; documentary-fiction film with the co-production *The USSR with the eyes of Italians/SSSR glazami italiantsev*

1964: first ever feature Italian-Soviet co-production film “Attack and Retreat” (*Italiani brava gente*) by De Santis

1965: Mikhail Kalatozov visited Cinecittà and met with Italian film studies students

1969: Italian-Soviet co-production film “Red Tent” (La tenda rossa/Krasnaya Palatka) by Kalatozov; Restrospective The Soviet Films for Children (Retrospectiva - Il Film Sovietico per Ragazzi)

Though it may seem that there was a period of great success for Soviet films following the rather weak decade of the 1950s, this was not actually the case. In the 1960s western audiences came to associate Soviet cinema with Andrej Tarkovsky, the only director who was completely accepted by foreign critics and whose films were always well distributed. The rest of Soviet cinema, however, still proved hard to access for Italians, a fact attested to by Giovanni Buttafava in the preface of his important work on Soviet cinema:

Proseguendo i nostri discorsi panorami sulle cinematografie straniere meno accessibili al pubblico delle normali sale cinematografiche – è di ieri un ampio saggio sul cinema cinese ‘ siamo lieti di pubblicare questo studio esauriente di Giovanni Buttafava sulla più recente generazione del cinema sovietico. Benché una decina di film vengano ogni anno importati e diversi altri siano proiettati nei circoli culturali, la maggior parte del cinema sovietico non giunge tuttora a noi. Buttafava offre un contributo di prima

mano, frutto di ripetuti soggiorni a Mosca e di visione diretta e mediata delle opere citate, sulla linea di quell'indagine scientifica della storia del cinema che vuol essere caratteristica della nostra rivista.<sup>178</sup>

Summarizing the main points of the previous chapters, it is important to note that Italian producers in the 1960s (and later in the 1970s) discovered several good reasons to co-produce with the USSR, and they began to profit from it. Though there were only a few films made in collaboration between the two countries, with the USSR still being a fairly closed country and international collaborations still uncommon, Italy was one of the most active players on that market.

Besides, finally there appeared an outstanding filmmaker – Andrei Tarkovsky – who had the role of so-called ‘cultural bridge’ between the USSR and the rest of the world.

## 5.5 Andrei Tarkovsky and Italy

It's surely crazy, criminal, that a director whom the Italian press called a genius should be unemployed.  
*Andrei Tarkovsky*

Tarkovsky is definitely the most studied, known, screened, and awarded Soviet film director abroad. Several works about Tarkovsky and his cinema had already been published by the 1980s in Italy, including his own works translated into Italian (like: Tarkovsky Andrei, *Scolpire il tempo*, Ubulibri, Milano, 1988 and Maraldi Antonio (a cura di), *Il Cinema secondo Andrej Tarkovskij*, Centro Cinema città di Cesena, Cesena, 1984) and numerous monographs about him. Of course, his popularity in Italy was furthered by the fact that he both worked and

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<sup>178</sup> Buttafava G. *Il giovane cinema sovietico* (introduction) in *Bianco e nero*, n. 11, 1961, p. 1

lived in the country: first in 1979-1980 when he was writing and shooting his “Nostalgia”, and then when he left the USSR in 1984 and lived in Florence for some time. His friendship with Italian filmmakers and their memories about him (written and filmed) also contributed to his reputation.

This current work has no need to study and analyze once again Tarkovsky’s films, or the years he lived in Italy (which are actually out of the period of interest), but will list the events that connected the Soviet director with Italy since his first success in Venice in 1962 until the shooting of his “Nostalgia” in Tuscany in 1979. This is because Tarkovsky the person that connected Soviet cinema to the West, and who brought new Soviet cinematography to Europe and to Italy in particular, the country that always welcomed him and his works.

His first director’s work “Ivan’s Childhood” was awarded in Venice together with Zurlini’s “Family Diary” (*Cronaca familiare*), but the Italian critics did not receive it with such enthusiasm.

Una giuria in apparenza salomonica, in realtà discorde, ha diviso in due il Leone d’oro, affiancando al film di Zurlini il meno maturo, anche se significativo – ma significativo soprattutto all’interno dell’U.R.S.S. – *Infanzia di Ivan* di Andrei Tarkovsky. Ma cosa può contare, questo che a me è parso infortunio del giuri. Se tra qualche anno, forse, dell’*Infanzia di Ivan* non rimarrà che un ricordo attutito – poiché il film ha tutti i limiti di un’”opera orima” e solo in questo settore avrebbe potuto distinguersi – mentre difficilmente potremo dimenticare la intensità poetica dell’opera matura e completa di Zurlini? [...]

Il significato di *infanzia di Ivan* mi sembra, per ora, del tutto locale: è indicativo di una tendenza del film sovietico “liberato”, non stalinista, come lo sono i film di Ciukhraj, Kalatozov, Bondarciuk, Kalik, Alov e Naumov: tutti tesi alla ricerca dell’uomo sovietico, alla scoperta della sua dimensione umana; ma non trasferirei l’importanza della *Infanzia di Ivan* dal piano puramente locale a quello internazionale.[...]

Il cinema di Tarkovsky è prevalentemente visivo, nel senso di un ritorno, nella novità della presentazione, a una tradizione; e Lirico, magari nel

solco già tracciato con vivezza dalla poesia di Pasternak e di Evtuscenko.<sup>179</sup>

Even “Unità” criticized the work of Tarkovsky, though Jean Paul Sartre, who was living in Italy at that time, sent a letter to the periodical defending the Soviet film that he was in favour of.<sup>180</sup>

Despite its success in Venice, Tarkovky’s film was not included in the programme of the Second Week of Soviet Cinema (Seconda settimana del cinema sovietico) in Milan and Rome in June 1963, though the film was publicly shown in Italian cinemas.<sup>181</sup>

Tarkovsky’s next film appeared in Italy in 1969 only for review of the critics, when “Andrei Rublev” was awarded the FIPRESCI prize at Cannes, as Soviet officials banned its participation in the contest. In France the film was distributed by DIC e Promeco film, but in Italy the film arrived on the screen only in 1975<sup>182</sup> (after “Solaris”), though Italian language was one of the three languages of the film and it seemed logical to screen it in the country. An Italian critic in 1969 was unambiguously favourable to Tarkovsky’s film in Italian cinema magazine “Bianco e Nero”:

Il regista de *L’infanzia di Ivan* offer una splendida conferma delle sue doti in questo grandioso affresco storico, mosso dall’appassionata difesa del ruolo dell’artista quale interprete del patrimonio spiritual dell’umanità ed elemento di costante tensione verso il superamento dell’abbruttimento determinato dalla violenza e dalla guerra. Il recupero del misticismo russo, non come scelta evasiva ma come energia creatrice opposta alla crudeltà della storia, spiega ampiamente le difficoltà incontrate dal film, nonostante il suo “patriottismo”. Il linguaggio delle icone trova in Tarkovsky un traspositore sensibile e raffinato, che non si limita però a far opera di

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<sup>179</sup> Mario Verdone, *Quattordici film meno due* in Bianco e nero, n. 9-10, 1962. P.7-10

<sup>180</sup> <https://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalghia.com/TheTopics/Sartre.html>

<sup>181</sup> Pellizzari L. *Il cinema sovietico dal Bortnikov all’Ivan* in Cinestudio. Quaderni del circolo monzese del cinema. N.11. 1964. p.40

<sup>182</sup> Puccini M.M. *Andrei Rublov.* / Documentazione sul cinema sovietico. Fondo Puccini. B1. P.1

erudizione pittorica, ma vivifica tutta un'eredità culturale con il senso della permanente attualità del conflitto fra arte e realtà. I valori figurativi del film, di per sé affascinanti, si animano quindi di una tensione drammatica che esplode in note laceranti e angosciose, anche se il lirismo delle immagini sembra talvolta estenuarsi un una bellezza rarefatta.<sup>183</sup>

The next events linking Tarkovsky and Italy can be taken directly from his own diaries. In October 1970, while he was known in Italy only as the director of “Ivan’s Childhood” and a Golden Lion winner, Tarkovsky wrote in his diaries that he was invited to Italy to shoot:

Roberto Coma telephoned again about my invitation to Italy to make *Joseph and His Brothers*, based on Thomas Mann. They've agreed in principle. Their Communist Party helps with the production and hiring of films. Roberto said that Visconti wanted to make a Mann film, but for some reason it fell through. It would be wonderful to make Joseph. Only how will the Committee react? It's hardly likely to get through. They're like a brick wall. Bondarchuk is the only one to break through it.<sup>184</sup>

The 1970s were marked by several visits of Tarkovsky to Italy, though according to his diary, it was always hard to get visas for him and very often he was waiting till the last moment to know the result.

His special attitude to Italy could be described by one of his phrases: “I am tired of these excessive beauties” («*Sono stanco di queste bellezze eccessive*» - the words he himself said to Tonino Guerra in “Voyage in Time” and the words he made Gorchakov, the main character of “Nostalghia”, say). He did not like Italy when it was too beautiful, while travelling with Guerra and searching for the views and landscapes to shoot, Tarkovsky always rejected the most beautiful places. That was his paradoxical attitude to the country – he did not like it because it was too fascinating for him sometimes. For example, in December 1972 he

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<sup>183</sup> Zambetti S. *Andrei Rublov/ I film di Cannes in Bianco e Nero*, n.7/8, luglio-agosto 1969. P.108

<sup>184</sup> Tarkovsky A. *Time Within Time*. The Diaries 1970-1986.

[https://monoskop.org/images/d/dd/Tarkovsky\\_Andrey\\_Time\\_Within\\_Time\\_The\\_Diaries\\_1970-1986.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/d/dd/Tarkovsky_Andrey_Time_Within_Time_The_Diaries_1970-1986.pdf)

wrote that he “didn't like Italy this time. Maybe it was because of the company, maybe because this time it struck me as twee, picture postcardish. (We went to Sorrento and Naples.)”.<sup>185</sup>

In the end of April/beginning of May 1974 Tarkovsky came to Italy again for the premiere of his “Solaris” with the actors who played the main characters – Donatas Banionis and Natalya Bondarchuk. The Italian version of the film was heavily edited and lasted thirty minutes less, a fact Tarkovsky was clearly indignant about in various interviews he gave in Italy.

We have been to Capri, to Rome, and had to go to Milan, but distributor (Mr. Lanzi) was afraid of the scandal I could have created about cutting the film, so we remained in Rome. The weather was crazy – it was raining heavily. I met Roberto Cuoma (communist). He worked as assistant director in “Red Tent”. Now he is a producer. He got me acquainted with two people in charge from the Italian (state) TV. They offered me:

1. Series of half-hour programs (in any quantity) after Gianni Rodari’s “Fairy Tales Over the Phone”;
2. they were extremely anxious about “Joseph and His Brothers”;
3. are ready for co-production of “Idiot” if there are several foreign actors.

Italy made an awful impression this time. Everybody talks about money, money and money. I met Fellini. He highly appreciates my talent. I saw his “Amarcord”.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Idem

<sup>186</sup> Были на Капри, в Риме, должны были ехать в Милан, но прокатчика (г. Ланци) испугала возможность скандала, который я мог бы устроить по поводу урезания фильма, и мы остались в Риме. Была дикая погода — лил проливной дождь. Виделся с Роберто Куома (коммунист). Работал 2-м режиссером на «Красной палатке». Сейчас продюсер. Познакомил меня с двумя ответственными лицами из итальянского телевидения (государственного). Они предлагают мне:

1. серию получасовых передач (любое количество) по Джанни Родари — «Сказки по телефону»;
2. дико загорелись «Иосифом и его братьями»;

The cut version of “Solaris” was not successful in Italy. Apart from being cut it was also reedited without Tarkovsky’s consent by Dacia Maraini. Tarkovsky was even going to bring legal action against Euro International Film (the Italian distribution company of the film, headed by Lanza). In the same period Tarkovsky wrote that “A company in Rome called Gold Film wants me to make Joseph”<sup>187</sup>. That project “Joseph and His Brothers” remained unrealised.

In 1975 “Andrei Rublev” finally arrived in Italy, when in the USSR that year Tarkovsky’s “Mirror” (*Zerkalo*) was released. The film drew the attention of the European cinema world, and the head of the Cannes festival, Maurice Bessy, tried to bring “Mirror” to France on several occasions, promising even the main award, but the Soviet officials always refused proposing other Soviet films.

Two years later, Maurice Bessy told Tarkovsky in Moscow that he was willing to take *The Mirror* unseen, but he was finally able to view it and immediately wanted it. He was told that it was not ready and they promised it to him for the next year. He then renewed his request, but to no avail.<sup>188</sup>

In June of the same year “Unità” wanted *Mirror* to come to Rome to be shown during the Unità Festival in Rome, but it did not happen. Four years later, in 1979 the Italian distributors of the film, knowing well how Tarkovsky was treated in the USSR, had to write an official letter to the Soviet officials in order to invite the director to the film premier in Italy:

Letter from the distributors of Mirror in Italy (brought by Tonino, with another one for me).

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3. готовы на совместного «Идиота» при условии нескольких иностранных актеров. Италия на этот раз произвела на меня ужасное впечатление. Все говорят о деньгах, о деньгах и о деньгах. Видел Феллини. Он очень высоко ставит мои способности. Смотрел его «Амаркорд».

Tarkovsky A. *Martirolog. Dnevnik*.

[http://royallib.com/book/tarkovskiy\\_andrey/martirolog\\_dnevnik.html](http://royallib.com/book/tarkovskiy_andrey/martirolog_dnevnik.html)

<sup>187</sup> Tarkovsky A. *Time Within Time. The Diaries 1970-1986*.

[https://monoskop.org/images/d/dd/Tarkovsky\\_Andrey\\_Time\\_Within\\_Time\\_The\\_Diaries\\_1970-1986.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/d/dd/Tarkovsky_Andrey_Time_Within_Time_The_Diaries_1970-1986.pdf)

<sup>188</sup> Chapron J. *Cannes and Russia: A Love-Hate Relationship*.

<http://www.festival-cannes.fr/en/article/57957.html>

To the Executive of Mosfilm  
Moscow

As the distributors in Italy of Tarkovsky's film *Mirror*, we have decided to present the film to the critics and the Italian press on the occasion of the premiere in San Vicente (Valle d'Aosta) in the presence of the author, Signor Tarkovsky. In the hope that this invitation will not interfere with Signor Tarkovsky's work schedule, we should be most grateful if you would be kind enough to decide on a date with him, in March, in order that preparations for the showing of the film may go ahead. We thank you in advance. It is a great honour for us to show one of your films to Italian audiences, who have always had the keenest interest in the work of Soviet cinematographers. We look forward to hearing from you, and send you our warmest wishes.

Italnoleggio Cinematografico s.p.a.  
L'amministratore unico  
Giancarlo Lagni<sup>189</sup>

In 1976 Tarkovsky and Tonino Guerra commenced a collaborative project, which initially they called "Voyage to Italy" (*Puteshestvie po Italii*). And that project required often and rather long stays in Italy, while the tension between Tarkovsky and the Soviet officials was already strong.

I have heard rumours—Larissa was told by N. A. Ivanov—that Yermash was against my going to Italy: all the others, basically Sizov and 'even

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<sup>189</sup> «Руководству „Мосфильма“,  
Москва

Являясь прокатчиками фильма Тарковского „Зеркало“ в Италии, мы решили представить фильм критикам и итальянской прессе в связи с премьерой весной 1979 года в Сант-Винсенте (Валле-д'Аоста) в присутствии автора, синьора Тарковского. Надеюсь, что это приглашение не нарушает рабочего обязательства синьора Тарковского, мы будем Вам очень признательны, если Вы согласитесь согласовать с нами дату (в марте месяце) с тем, чтобы подготовить представление фильма. Заранее благодарим Вас. Для нас большая честь представлять фильм Вашего производства итальянской публике, всегда такой неравнодушной к произведениям советских кинематографистов. В ожидании сообщений от Вас, шлем сердечные пожелания.

Tarkovsky A. *Martirolog. Dnevnik*.

[http://royallib.com/book/tarkovskiy\\_andrey/martirolog\\_dnevnik.html](http://royallib.com/book/tarkovskiy_andrey/martirolog_dnevnik.html)

Dobrokhotov' were in favour. We shall see. Particularly as Tonino said that Berlenguer is involved.<sup>190</sup>

Actually, the work on the film started only in 1979. At first, in April Tarkovsky was allowed to come to Italy, to San Vincente, for a week for the Mirror premier. During that week he met in Rome with Antonioni, Rosi and Fellini, and gave an interview to Tonino Guerra for Panorama magazine where he spoke also about the shooting of the 'Voyage to Italy',<sup>191</sup>.

The Italians offered to enter Mirror for the Donatello prize (Academy Award) with assurances that it would be selected. Our people refused, and suggested some film by Lotyanu instead of Mirror. Everyone in Rome is staggered.

The film was, anyway, awarded in Italy the next year, in 1980, with David Luchino Visconti.

And Tarkovky in June 1979 was finally given permission for a 2-month stay in Italy. Furthermore, his film with Tonino Guerra was renamed as "Voyage in Time", and it took them several years to finally realize "Nostalgia" (1983) and feature documentary "Voyage in Time" (1983). A year later, in 1984 Tarkovky announced at a press conference in Milan that he would not return to the USSR.

## 5.6 Tonino Guerra and his work with the Soviet filmmakers

Non era solo il più "russo" tra gli italiani, ma anche l'uomo al quale il destino aveva riservato di essere il tramite attraverso il quale le correnti di pensiero, energia e cultura dal Vecchio Mondo passavano in Russia e dalla Russia in l'Europa. Era sposato con Eleonora Jäblotchkina, una bellissima

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<sup>190</sup> Tarkovsky A. *Time Within Time. The Diaries 1970-1986*.  
[https://monoskop.org/images/d/dd/Tarkovsky\\_Andrey\\_Time\\_Within\\_Time\\_The\\_Diaries\\_1970-1986.pdf](https://monoskop.org/images/d/dd/Tarkovsky_Andrey_Time_Within_Time_The_Diaries_1970-1986.pdf)

<sup>191</sup> *Tarkovsky at the Mirror*. Conversation between Andrei Tarkovsky and Tonino Guerra.  
[http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalgia.com/TheTopics/Tarkovsky\\_Guerra-1979.html](http://people.ucalgary.ca/~tstronds/nostalgia.com/TheTopics/Tarkovsky_Guerra-1979.html)

signora russa, ed è stato amico dei più grandi e talentuosi figli dell'Unione Sovietica, da Andrej Tarkovskij a Bella Akhmadulina, da Yurij Ljubimov a Yurij Norshtein e Georgij Danelija, anche se la lista di coloro senza i quali Tonino Guerra non poteva nemmeno immaginare la propria esistenza è ben più lunga.<sup>192</sup>

The first connection of Guerra with Russia happened when Vittorio De Sica was shooting his “Sunflower” (*I girasoli*) in the USSR, and Guerra was one of the screenwriters.

In 1975 Tonino Guerra met his future wife Lora – Eleonora Yablochkina – in Moscow, and since then he was forever connected with Russia. Eleonora, whom he married in 1977, was working at Mosfilm studios as an editor at that time, and knew many Soviet filmmakers, who later became friends with Tonino too, and Tarkovsky was among them. Tarkovsky was also a bridesman at their wedding, while the groom was Michelangelo Antonioni, Guerra’s friend with whom they won Oscar for the “Blow-up”.

Guerra and Antonioni both arrived in Russia in 1976 to search for landscapes for the shooting of “Kite” (*L’acquilone*).

Intanto, discutendo e viaggiando con Tonino Guerra, a metà degli anni Settanta cominciò a concretizzarsi il suo progetto di realizzare *L’acquilone*, da una favola dello stesso Guerra che piaceva moltissimo a Italo Calvino (M. Antonioni, T. Guerra, *L’acquilone*, 1982). Storia di un aquilone che vola sempre più in alto e non si ferma mai, trascinato da una misteriosa corrente fino a distanziarsi migliaia di chilometri dalla Terra. Uno splendido racconto, al confine con la fantascienza, ricco di poesia e che a quel tempo sembrò trovare la sua ambientazione ideale in Uzbekistan, dove anche il divario tra mondo arcaico e mondo tecnologico, necessario alla storia, appariva più evidente. Ma a causa dei costi eccessivi e delle

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<sup>192</sup> Josipova L. *Il più russo tra gli italiani* (traduzione dell’articolo da Izvestija)  
<http://www.rai.it/dl/tg3/articoli/ContentItem-cf42b59d-1c70-4d2c-9134-a04a29232524.html>

innumerevoli difficoltà produttive e tecniche, anche questo progetto non si concretizzò.<sup>193</sup>

Giving permission to Guerra and Antonioni to travel through the Asian republics of the USSR, the Soviet authorities also suggested to them (without the possibility of refusal, of course) to shoot also an publicity film about the southern Soviet republics (working title “Warm Russia”). Antonioni accepted all the conditions, hoping that he could use the most up-to-date cinema equipment and the landscapes he chose in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The head of Goskino, Philipp Yermash, instead, insisted on shootings in Crimea and the North Caucasus. According to the agreements between Antonioni and Yermash, all the film crew had to be Italian, as well as the equipment. Antonioni also asked for an Italian visa for Lora, who was already engaged with Guerra, and who was also a screenwriter of the project and was needed in Italy to finish the script. Uzbekistan was an ideal place for “L’acquilone”, as it was unusual for the occidental spectator; besides, it was possible to shoot there with helicopters and other equipment with the help of the Soviet military, which greatly reduced the costs. Among the places visited in Uzbekistan by Italians were: Kokand, the desert near Kayrakkum Reservoir, Khiva and Bukhara. Guerra also wrote that they had to consult with Soviet space experts (as the plot included the Moon episodes), so they went to visit the Observatory in Bolshoi Zelenchuk Valley.

This project was also going to involve the Soviet co-writer of the script Odelsha Agishev, cinematographer Luciano Tovoli, producer Alessandro von Norman, as well as Yuri Klimenko, and art director Shavkat Abdulsalamov. All the materials of the film belonged to Mosfilm studios, according to the agreements. In 1976 Guerra and Antonioni finished the script and sent it to the Moscow studios, where the head of the script board D. Orlov asked for several alterations to make it more “Soviet”. Goskino still insisted on shooting in the Caucasus region, so Antonioni and Guerra went to Armenia and Azerbaijan in the same year, 1976. In Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, Italians met with local young filmmakers: Maksud Ibragimbekov, Eldar Kuliev and Ziya Shilhinsky, who accompanied Antonioni

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<sup>193</sup> Michelangelo Antonio in Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani  
[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/michelangelo-antonioni\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/michelangelo-antonioni_(Dizionario-Biografico)/)

and Guerra for the entirety of their voyage, and who in 2012 realized the film dedicated to Tonino Guerra “Where This Road Came” (*Kuda shla eta doroga*).

The project of “L’acquilone” as a film was not realized, as Antonioni was forced to develop and to edit the film in the USSR, and not in Italy. In 1979 he explained in an interview with Aldo Tassone that it was not possible to finish the project as the Soviet filmmakers did not have all the necessary equipment and the staff that could work with it, though the landscapes and other technical opportunities were ideal.

It was also confirmed by the Uzbek film director Ali Khamraev who accompanied Antonioni and Guerra during their trip to Uzbekistan. He said that the Soviet Union did not have all the necessary conditions; besides, the negative belonged to Mosfilm and not to Italian directors or producers. Odelsha Agishev, who should have been one of the film co-writers, blamed the Central Committee of the CPSU and Suslov personally, saying that the politic was afraid that Antonioni in the USSR could realize an inappropriate film (as he heard that “Zabriskie Point” was not accepted by the American authorities, and “Chung Kuo, China” was a scandal in China). The film script was published finally as a book in 1982, and only in the 1990s did Antonioni think again about filming “L’acquilone”. Guerra, moreover, made another trip to Russia.<sup>194</sup> Tonino Guerra gathered all his memories about that trip in a book “La pioggia tiepida”, published in 1984.

In the 1970s Guerra also made an important friendship with theatre director Yuri Lyubimov, a friendship that later resulted in collaboration when “Miele” (Miod) was staged at the Taganka theatre in Moscow.

During his stays in Moscow during the 1970s, Tonino Guerra often met with Tarkosvky, as they had apartments situated nearby. Tarkovsky often mentioned that they understood each other very well.<sup>195</sup>

Io e mia moglie, Lora, abbiamo fatto di tutto per farlo venire in Italia.  
Aveva una grande disponibilità sulle labbra e negli occhi, le parole precise

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<sup>194</sup>The story reproduced here after the publication of Goskino documents and Tonino Guerra’s interview by Olga Yumasheva, *Pestraya lenta* in *Iskusstvo kino*, n.8, 1994, p.63-72

<sup>195</sup> Martini G. (a cura di). *Tonino Guerra. Una regione piena di cinema*. Regione Emilia Romagna. 2004. P. 106

e pungenti. Durante la realizzazione di *Tempo di viaggio*, Andrej contemplava il paesaggio italiano, ma aveva il cruccio di essere un privilegiato, vedendo ciò che agli altri russi era negato. Amava la Russia: i suoi orizzonti. E aveva l'impressione che i muri italiani fossero per un miope.<sup>196</sup>

It was Guerra who often helped Tarkosvky with all his visits to Italy, involving Italian officials or other important filmmakers to influence and to take part in the situation. And it was not only about Tarkovsky.

La Russia lo rapisce e vi torna spesso, sempre pieno di entusiasmo. Si lega a registi ed artisti che poi contribuisce a far conoscere e amare nel mondo, talvolta travagliati per la loro condizione di perseguitati o mal tollerati dal regime sovietico. Lui e Lora li aiutano e li sostengono.<sup>197</sup>

Those friendships Guerra made in Moscow in the 1970s led to numerous collaborations – no one among Italian filmmakers had so many projects in collaboration with Soviet/Russian cinema. Later in the 1980s and 1990s Guerra made several films with Vladimir Nauomov (“White Feast”, “Clock Without Hands”), with Alexander Sokurov (“Moscow Elegy”, a documentary about Tarkosvky) and with Andrei Khrzhanovsky (“The Dog, The General and The Birds”, “Lion with A White Beard”, “Long Trip” and “Lilaby for the Cricket” – both based on Fellini’s pictures).<sup>198</sup>

## 5.7 1970s: “Recessive” period

The 1970s were not so fruitful for Soviet cinema at Italian film festivals, though

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<sup>196</sup> Martini G. (a cura di). *Tonino Guerra. Una regione piena di cinema*. Regione Emilia Romagna. 2004. P. 135

<sup>197</sup> Giannini, R. *La Russia e I suoi incanti. Tratto da "Tonino Guerra - Il sorriso della terra*. Ed. Veronelli, 2006

<http://www.toninoguerra.org/doc/russia.htm>

<sup>198</sup> <http://fabriziofalconi.blogspot.it/2012/03/tonino-guerra-andrej-tarkovskij-e-la.html>

the Venice Film Festival was not competitive from 1969 to 1979. Moreover, far fewer films participated than the preceding years, and the popularity and success of films from the USSR after the 1960s were notably less. Soviet films were still not screened very often in Italian cinemas, which are a reason why there existed more special weeks devoted to Soviet cinema, initiatives that had begun in the previous decade. In addition, the period following the Khrushchev Thaw saw a return to a more conservative and authoritative control of power in the USSR, meaning cinema (as well as other kinds of art) was not as free as before, and consequently was less interesting and artistic. So, that is why the period of the 1970s for the Soviet cinema in Italy can be labeled “recessive”.

This period did not see many significant events in Italy for Soviet cinema:

1972: At the Venice Film Festival Soviet director Anatoli Golovnya received a Golden Lion career prize (Leone d'oro alla carriera)

1973: Soviet Cinema Today (rassegna: Cinema sovietico oggi), 30 March – 11 April, Bologna; meeting of Italian and Soviet cinematographers in Rome

1974: San Remo International Film Festival – Grand Prize for “The Plea” (*Molba*) by Tenghiz Abuladze

1977: Week of Soviet Cinema (La settimana del cinema sovietico) in Verona, 16-22 of June; Rassegna del film sovietico in December in Rome and Turin

1979: David di Donatello for the best foreign film to “The Wishing Tree” (*Drevo zhelania*) by Tenghiz Abuladze

In the 1970s, as well as later in the 1980s and 1990s, in Italy there arrived only 3-6 films a year<sup>199</sup>, and very often they arrived with some significant delay. Soviet cinema could be seen mainly during those festivals, because they simply lost the market.

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<sup>199</sup> Falcinella N. *Il cinema russo russo in Italia/ Spagnoletti G. (a cura di). Cinema russo contemporaneo.* Marsilio. 2010. P.217

Manca la produzione in serie, tipica della pratica produttiva hollywoodiana, ogni film nasce e si sviluppa con tempi fissi, non celeri (un regista molto attivo dirige un film ogni due anni).<sup>200</sup>

During the 1970s, the Western world began to associate the USSR with film bans and censorship. One of these symbolic figures of those interdictions was Armenian director, Serghei Parajanov, a proponent for free thought and expression who worked in Ukraine. His work was noted in Europe, and he was only released from Soviet prison on account of his international popularity and support of the most important European filmmakers. Though Parajanov is mentioned in almost all Italian books about Soviet cinema, his biography and his works are still not written in detail, so it is rather necessary to gather his short biography information in the current chapter.

## **5.8 Case of Sergei Parajanov**

Sergei Iosifovich Parajanov (in Russian version), or Sargis Ovsepovich Parajanjan (in Armenian) was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1924 in Tbilisi (USSR, now Georgia) to an Armenian family. After graduating from school in 1942 he entered the Tbilisi University of Railway Transport, in the Architectural Department, but soon he left it to begin his study at the Conservatory – in the violin and vocal class. At the same time Parajanov took dancing lessons at the Georgian National Opera and Ballet Theatre of Tbilisi and even worked in military hospitals with the concert troupe. In 1945 he was transferred to the Moscow Conservatory, but very soon got interested in cinema, so he decided to enter VGIK to become a director in the class of Igor Savchenko. In 1948 while studying, Parajanov assisted Savchenko as a director in the shooting of his “Tretij udar” (*The Third Kick*) and in 1949 he also took part in the shooting of Savchenko’s film “Taras Shevchenko”, and together with his classmates he finished the picture after the

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<sup>200</sup> Buttafava G. *Il cinema russo e sovietico*. Ed. Bianco e Nero, 2000. p.196

death of the teacher. After Savchenko the class was headed by Alexander Dovzhenko.

“Moldavskaya skazka” (*Moldavian Tale*) became Parajanov’s graduating work in 1952. His reference to Moldavia was not spontaneous: as a student he married a Tatar girl with Moldavian origins called Nigyar. She married Parajanov without her family’s permission, so they asked Parajanov for a traditional bride price, or bridewealth. He had to ask his rich father, an antiquarian, for money, but was refused because his father did not support his interest in cinema and had hopes that he would also become an antiquarian. The bride’s family according to their traditions ordered Nigyar to leave the husband and come back to her country. Her denial was a great shame for them, so they killed the girl by pushing her in front of a train. Some sources, however, mention her conversion to the Orthodox Church from Islam as the main reason for her family killing her.

After graduating from VGIK Parajanov, was sent to Kyiv, and his first work as an assistant director was with “Maksimka” by Vladimir Braun. In 1955 he shot his debut film “Andriesh” at the Dovzhenko Film Studios in Kyiv together with Yakov Bazelyan<sup>201</sup>, where once again he referred to the Moldavian theme used in his graduation work, based on a book by Moldavian writer, Emilian Bukov. Some years later Parajanov realized several documentary works: “Natalia Uzhvij” (about famous Ukrainian actress), “Dumka”, “Zolotye ruki” (*Hands of Gold*).

“Pervyi paren” (*The Top Guy*), a comedy with famous Liubov Orlova in the cast, is considered Parajanov’s first full-length film (“Andriesh” was mid-length) and was also shot in Kyiv in 1958, and received about 21,7 million spectators in the USSR. Parajanov was also interested in showing folklore, this time the Ukrainian one, and opens to himself and his spectators the world of the Ukrainian village with its texture and poetry. Parajanov was fond of the landscapes, his female characters and other visual details, but was very unsatisfied with the plot<sup>202</sup> and the humour. In 1961 he shot his “Ukrainian Rhapsody”, which was not successful either with the public or the critics.

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<sup>201</sup> Soviet director, graduated from VGIK in 1952, was a student of Mikhail Romm.

<sup>202</sup> The screenwriters were Piotr Lubenskij and Victor Bezorud’ko.

Parajanov's next film was "Tsvetok na kamne" (*Flower on the Stone*), co-directed with Anatoliy Slesarenko in 1962. During the shooting tragedy happened: the starring actress Inna Burduchenko died after she got numerous burns in the scene where she saved a banner from the burning building. Slesarenko, as he was the responsible director, was arrested and convicted. Parajanov had to finish the film and renamed it, changing the original title "Tak esche nikto ne lyubil" (*Nobody Yet Loved It So*) to "Tsvetok na kamne" (*Flower on the Stone*). The film was not a success and sold only 5,2 million tickets in the USSR, because the Ukrainian authorities who criticized the film limited its distribution by making only 158 copies. The same year "Ivan's Childhood" arrived on the screen and Parajanov highly appreciated the film, and became friends with Tarkovsky. That friendship would last all his life and would also be somehow helpful during Parajanov's imprisonment.

In about ten years Parajanov shot four fiction films and was not yet a famous and successful director when two years later he made his masterpiece, the film that brought him international fame – "Teni zabytykh predkov" (*Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, sometimes it was translated as *The Fire Horses* in some countries, like France – *Les Chevaux de feu*, or in Italy – *I cavalli di fuoco*) based on the novel by Mikhail Kotsiubinsky about Hutsul man Ivan. The film was made to celebrate the centennial of birth of the Ukrainian writer, and was full of folklore and religious details; the story of Ukrainian Romeo and Juliet was masterly told and accompanied by outstanding costumes and color film. Notwithstanding the artistic merits of the film, Parajanov received seven warnings from the Studios's director, and was accused of sectarianism as he visited the sects (for depicting it in the film, actually). Nonetheless the film got positive critical reviews in the Soviet press, attracted about 8,5 million spectators and rather successfully participated in the international film festivals. Russian sources mention the awards for the film in 1965 in Rome, the Golden Medal at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival in 1966 (no mention about these facts in other languages). The same is listed at the official website of the

Parajanov-Vartanov Institute<sup>203</sup>, as is a Grand Prix of the Mar del Plata International Film Festival in 1965. In fact, the film got the prize for the Best Production and an honorable mention of the Argentine Film Critics Association “for color photography and special effects”<sup>204</sup> at the Mar del Plata International Film Festival in 1965.

Andrew Sarris, who was reviewing the festival for *Variety*, characterized the film as “technically admirable if dramatically incomprehensible”. Reviewing the film at Venice (under the mistaken title *In the Shadow of the Past*), Gene Moskowitz of *Variety* called it “visually resplendent” and “a youthfully excessive, but filmically beguiling film in spite of its way out techniques”.<sup>205</sup>

For years Parajanov could not realize all his projects, the Soviet cinematographic directions rejected such films.

In its time there were declines all my projects, such as “Sevastopol’skij mal’chik” (*A Sevastopol Boy*), “Skazki ob Italii” (*Tales of Italy*), “Dvenadtsat’ mesjatsev” (*Twelve Months*), “Kazak Mamaj” (*Cossack Mamai*), “Slepoi Muzykant” (*Blind Musician*). Now they banned “Kievskie freski” (*Kiev’s Frescoes*), claiming that instead of working I am peacocking.<sup>206</sup>

The film “Kievskie Freski” (*Kiev’s Frescoes*) was banned during its shooting in 1966 and today only about 10-14 minutes of it have survived. Finally, the same year, Parajanov got permission to shoot a new film in Armenia, and two next

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<sup>203</sup> <http://www.parajanov.com/shadowsofforgottenancestors.html>

<sup>204</sup> Steffen, J. *The Cinema of Sergei Parajanov*. University of Wisconsin Press, 2013. p. 73.

<sup>205</sup> Idem

<sup>206</sup> В свое время были отклонены все мои предложения – такие, как «Севастопольский мальчик», «Сказки об Италии», «Двенадцать месяцев», «Казак Мамай», «Слепой музыкант». Теперь же зарубили «Киевские фрески», заявив при этом, что вместо настоящей работы я занимаюсь позерством.

Zakojan, G. *Ispoved’ Sergeja Parajanova, ...sobrannaja i skolazhirovannaja Gareghinom Zakojanom* (Sergei Parajanov’s Confession) in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* N.44, 1999

years he was busy with “Sayat-Nova” at the Armenfilm studios. The film was finished in 1968 and was screened to Goskino censors, and they severely criticized the director, accusing him of pornography and mysticism.

In una delle proiezioni private a Erevan, i delegate del Comitato Centrale del PCUS uscirono prima della fine. Il giorno seguente fecero chiamare Paradzanov per dirgli che il suo film era privo di senso e che lui era pazzo. Col pretesto del carattere puramente lirico e anti-narrativo del film fu esclusa qualsiasi possibilità di distribuzione.<sup>207</sup>

The film unfortunately coincided with the suppression of the “Prague Spring”, and Parajanov was the first to sign protest the “Kiev Letter-139” addressed to Leonid Brezhnev, claiming to stop the practice of illegal political trials. All of those who signed the letter were later persecuted and arrested. The film was significantly censored and changed its title to “Tsvet granata” (*The Color of Pomegranates*). After that the film was allowed to screen only in Armenia, and later it was reedited by Yutkevich to be screened in the USSR, in one cinema in Moscow and one in Leningrad. And Parajanov was mentioned only as a screenwriter, while the director was named as Samveljan.<sup>208</sup> The film arrived outside the USSR only after Parajanov’s release from prison in 1980, and in 1982 it appeared in the top-10 list of the best films of the year by Cahiers du cinema.<sup>209</sup>

Fellini, essendo uno del regista principale e dell'amico di Parajanov, ha confessato che ha dovuto guardare ripetutamente la pellicola “Il colore del melograno” per capire il relativo significato.<sup>210</sup>

Fellini liked the film a lot and later when he was in the Soviet Union with Masina, he asked for a meeting with Sofiko Chiaureli, the Georgian actress that played the main character.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Picchi M. *Sergej Paradžanov*. Il Castoro Editrice. Milano. 1994. P.67

<sup>208</sup><sup>208</sup> Picchi M. *Sergej Paradžanov*. Il Castoro Editrice. Milano. 1994. P.69

<sup>209</sup> <http://alumnus.caltech.edu/~ejohnson/critics/cahiers.html#y1982>

<sup>210</sup> <http://www.atb.am/it/armenia/sights/museum/parajanovmuseum/>

On 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1973 Parajanov was arrested in Kiev when he visited his son Suren. He received several charges, and it was not entirely clear (even for the officials) for which he was sentenced: either currency exchanges (prohibited in the USSR), or robbery from churches (as he collected icons), or bribery. Finally he was accused of homosexuality and the violation of a Communist Party member, and was sentenced for five years in prison.

Parajanov received international support during all the years of imprisonment. He often got correspondence from Federico Fellini, and the Italian director always supported his friend with words like: "I worry for your life, you are a great person, hold out"<sup>212</sup>. Fellini sent him congratulations on Christmas and New Year and once he mentions something like: "see you soon", so the prison wardens asked him who was writing from Italy and why he hoped to see Parajanov soon. Being an extraordinary person, he joked about his brother Fyodor Fellini who moved to Italy from the Soviet Union. Parajanov invented the story about their Italian grandmother Fellini who was a revolutionist, and Fyodor moved to her in his childhood, and now many years afterwards was going to visit his brother in prison and make a lecture about Italian proletarians and how they celebrate the New Year. Parajanov tried to convince the wardens that their prison would become world famous after his brother's visit, so they wrote to their bosses: "We found it possible to celebrate New Year in our prison with the lecture of Italian instructor comrade Fyodor Fellini, a brother of the prisoner Parajanov. Please confirm"<sup>213</sup>. That request moved higher and higher in bureaucratic system until it was discovered that it was false.

To save Parajanov from prison a special International Committee for Liberation of Parajanov was formed, consisting of a group of international cinematographers, including some of his friends.

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<sup>211</sup> Chernitsina, M. *Interview with Nikolay Shengelaya*  
<http://7days.ru/caravan/2015/10/nikolay-shengelaya-to-chto-mama-ostavila-otsta-stalo-dlya-menya-tragediey/5.htm#ixzz4YN5fmXz4>

<sup>212</sup>"Волнуюсь за твою судьбу, ты ведь великий человек, держись"  
Goncharov A. *Paradjanov Serghei Iosifovich*. On the bibliographical portal: <http://chtoby-pomnili.com/page.php?id=124>

<sup>213</sup> Idem

Support groups for Paradjanov were formed internationally, to promote his liberation from prison. A petition with 5,000 signatures, which included the names of artists and writers with a worldwide reputation, and film directors including Pasolini, Buñuel, Agnes Varda, Truffaut, Godard, Resnais, Jacques Tati, Fellini, Visconti, Rossellini, Antonioni, Bertolucci, was submitted to the Soviet authorities with no effect.<sup>214</sup>

Tarkovsky also wrote letters to Shcherbitsky, the Communist Party secretary in Ukraine in 1974, after the arrest but before the sentence, imploring him that Soviet cinema needed such artists as Parajanov. His letter did not help.

It was Louis Aragon, a French poet and the husband of writer Elsa Triolet, who was the sister of Lilya Brik. Lilya strived for the meeting of Aragon and Brezhnev, and soon afterwards Parajanov was released, with a ban from living in Ukraine.

Parajanov was a special case in the story of Soviet cinema, the one who was supported by the international cinema society and the one who fought for the freedom of artists. His films were loved by filmmakers and cinema experts, but not by the Soviet power. His uniqueness marked him out for them as a threat.

Paradžanov ha ribaltato la prospettiva tipica (e tanto discutibile) di molta produzione locale sovietica, che fa man bassa nel folklore, nel pittoresco.<sup>215</sup>

## 5.9 Chapter conclusion

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<sup>214</sup> Robertson R. *Cinema and the Audiovisual Imagination: Music, Image, Sound*. I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd. 2014. p. 144-145

<sup>215</sup> Buttafava G. *Il cinema russo e sovietico*. Ed. Bianco e Nero, 2000. p.118

The 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were unquestionably special decades for Soviet/Italian cinematographic relations. In this thirty-year period striking changes took place: it started with the total absence of Soviet films in Italy and the Soviet boycott of the Venice Film Festival, and finished with the established of several festivals dedicated to Soviet cinema and the co-production of various works. Despite the USSR's closed nature, several meetings between Italian and Soviet filmmakers took place, and various Soviet directors came to Italy to participate in different film festivals and visit Cinecittà, exchanging their experiences with their Italian counterparts and meeting the Italian public. Italian directors also visited the USSR with similar objectives, and took part in the Moscow Film festival. Moreover, the meetings between Italian and Soviet filmmakers were not closed, inner-professional symposiums, but were more open with screenings of Soviet films in Italy and press conferences, appealing to a wide range of cultural interests. Those thirty years were, of course, closely connected with the policy of the CPSU, and due to the important changes in the political life of the country, Soviet cinema also changed decidedly. The Khrushchev Thaw that relaxed the censorship and was critical towards the preceding reign of Stalin and his personality cult gave hope and new breath to the Soviet filmmakers. The taste of freedom (that was, of course, only freedom relatively to the previous decade) forever changed the artists' way of thinking and self-expression in the USSR. Even the efforts of Brezhnev in the 1970s could not help the filmmakers to turn back again under the limits and frames, and that was the reason for the conflicts, especially with the most 'free' directors like Tarkovsky and Parajanov, mentioned in the chapter. Due to the popularity and success of their films in Europe, their situation in the Soviet Union attracted the attention of the international film society, which tried to interfere. It is difficult to say that they completely succeeded, for example, as in Tarkovsky's case it was possible to 'release' him and make him live and work in Europe, having honorary citizenship in Florence, but he was separated from his father and his son, and his name was under taboo in the USSR, as well as his films (for the fact that he declared at the press-conference in Milan that he was not going to return to the Soviet Union). His friend Tonino Guerra mentioned Tarkovsky's great nostalgia

for Russia, the director himself wrote in his diary that the opportunities that Italy offered him for shootings were not equal to those he had in the USSR. Parajanov's case was more successful because he was literally released from prison due to the help of foreign filmmakers and artists, though he remained without work for many years and had no permission to come to Ukraine anymore.

The most important decade was, of course, the 1960s, when the number of Soviet films that arrived in Italy significantly increased, the first co-productions took place and they were more successful than the following collaborations of the 1970s. Moreover, the presence of Soviet cinema at Italian festival at that time was the most representative. Personal relations between filmmakers began to play an important role, and Grigory Chukhrai was one of the main figures to form a connection with Italy.

Chukhrai was the main figure in Soviet cinematography during the 1960s that was attempting to improve relations with foreign filmmakers, especially in Italy. Starting with his festival successes in Europe, he continued to be a 'representative' of Soviet cinema in Italy and of Italian cinema in the USSR. This paradoxical statement means that he made his best to invite Italian filmmakers to the Soviet Union and to involve them, as the representatives of the one of the best cinematography of that time, into the cultural life of the USSR. Chukhrai had a unique position as he was at the same time a very successful and well-known director and held offices in different state institutions like Goskino, the Union of the Cinematographers of the Soviet Union, the Associations USSR-Italy and USSR-Hungary. This was unique as all of the offices in such kind of institutions were usually held by politicians and not by the artists themselves. The scandal that happened with Fellini at the Moscow Film Festival when Chukhrai headed the jury showed how the artist's merits transcended all the political barriers and made Chukhrai save the image of the whole Soviet cinematography in the eyes of the world cinema society.

The 1950s-1970s was a period that led to future collaboration in which both Italian and Soviet filmmakers learnt more about each other's work. Soviet films in Italy made a huge step forward from zero to total acceptance and even love

from the side of Italian spectators and cinema experts. It was the time when cinema was divided in the mind of Italians from the Soviet power, as the era of films of Stalin's propaganda was over, and new Soviet directors proved their talents. Soviet cinema, if the Soviet film festivals and retrospectives are to be considered, was no longer exotic or unknown, but became gradually more recognized and expected by Italian spectators. Perhaps this caused problems for the future generations of Soviet and Russian filmmakers, as the level was already exceptionally high, to make Italians accept their works with the same passion and admiration.

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Countries, Italia-URSS

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AVP RF - Archive of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation

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