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## Theoretical Concepts of Film Studies in the *Cinema Art Journal* During the Perestroika Era: 1986–1991

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### Abstract

The analysis of film studies concepts (in the context of the sociocultural and political situation, etc.) of the existence of the *Cinema Art* journal during the period of "perestroika" (1986–1991) showed that theoretical works on cinematic subjects during this period can be divided into the following types:

- scientific-publicistic articles written under the influence of perestroika trends of change in Soviet society, including the sphere of cinema (V. Fomin, E. Gromov, S. Dobrotvorskyy, S. Lavrentiev, etc.).

- theoretical articles and discussions dedicated primarily to professional issues: analysis of the theoretical heritage of the classics of Soviet cinema, directing, the problem of "Cinema and the Spectator," etc. (Y. Bogomolov, E. Levin, I. Levshina, N. Klimontovich, L. Mamatova, M. Turovskaya, M. Yampolsky, M. Zak, etc.);

- theoretical articles on foreign cinematography (S. Lavrentiev, V. Matizen, O. Reisen, and others).

Overall, between 1986 and 1991 the *Cinema Art* journal significantly shifted away from the former ideological stereotypes of Soviet film studies, and took a radical re-examination of the history of Soviet and world cinema, as well as an objective evaluation of contemporary film production.

**Keywords:** theoretical concepts, film studies, *Cinema Art Journal*.

### 1. Introduction

In studies by scholars (Andrew, 1976; 1984; Aristarco, 1951; Aronson, 2003; 2007; Balázs, 1935; Bazin, 1971; Bergan, 2006; Branigan, Buckland, 2015; Casetti, 1999; Demin, 1966; Eisenstein, 1939; 1940; 1964; Freilich, 2009; Gibson et al, 2000; Gledhill, Williams, 2000; Hill, Gibson, 1998; Humm, 1997; Khrenov, 2006; 2011; Kuleshov, 1987; Lebedev, 1974; Lipkov, 1990; Lotman, 1973; 1992; 1994; Mast, Cohen, 1985; Metz, 1974; Razlogov, 1984; Sokolov, 2010; Stam, 2000; Villarejo, 2007; Weisfeld, 1983; Weizman, 1978; Zhdan, 1982 and others) have discussed film studies concepts many times. We should also note A. Korochensky's fundamental work on the problems of media criticism in general (Korochensky, 2003).

However, until now there has been no interdisciplinary comparative analysis of the evolution of theoretical aspects of film studies in the entire time interval of the existence of the *Cinema Art* journal (from 1931 to the present) in world science.

It is well known that theoretical concepts in film studies are fluid and often subject to fluctuating courses of political regimes.

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Hence it is understandable that the Soviet film studies literature (Lebedev, 1974; Weisfeld, 1983; Weizman, 1978; Zhdan, 1982, etc.) tended to exhibit communist-oriented ideological approaches. As for foreign scholars (Kenez, 1992; Lawton, 2004; Shaw, Youngblood, 2010; Shlapentokh, 1993; Strada, Troper, 1997; and others), their works on Soviet and Russian cinema focused primarily on the political and artistic aspects of cinema and rarely touched on theoretical film studies in the USSR and Russia (one of the few exceptions: Hill, 1960).

In our previous articles on theoretical concepts of film studies in the *Cinema Art* journal (Fedorov, Levitskaya, 2022), we investigated the period of the 1930s and early 1940s and 1945–1955. In this article we analyze the theoretical concepts of film studies in the *Cinema Art* journal during the "stagnation" period – from 1969 to 1985.

In this article, we focus on the analysis of the theoretical concepts of film studies in *Cinema Art* journal during the Perestroika period (1986–1991), when its editors were Yury Cherepanov (1986) and Konstantin Scherbakov (1987–1991).

In Table 1 we present some statistical data that reflect the changes in the organizations that published the journal from 1986 to 1991; we also note the names of the editors, and the number of articles on film theory in each year of the journal's publication.

**Table 1.** Journal *Cinema Art* (1986–1991): statistical data

Year of issue of the journal	The organization whose organ was the journal	Circulation (in thousand copies)	Periodicity of the journal (numbers per year)	Editor-in-chief	Number of articles on film theory
1986	USSR State Committee on Cinematography, Union of Cinematographers of the USSR	50	12	Y. Cherepanov (№ 1–11) Editorial Board (№ 12)	11
1987	USSR State Committee on Cinematography, Union of Cinematographers of the USSR	50	12	Editorial Board (№ 1–2) K. Scherbakov (№ 3–12)	3
1988	USSR State Committee on Cinematography, Union of Cinematographers of the USSR	53–54	12	K. Scherbakov	11
1989	USSR State Committee on Cinematography, Union of Cinematographers of the USSR (№ 1); Union of Cinematographers of the USSR (№ 2–12)	53	12	K. Scherbakov	12
1990	Union of Cinematographers of the USSR	48–68	12	K. Scherbakov	19
1991	Union of Cinematographers of the USSR (№ 1–9); Union of				

	Cinematographers of the USSR and the staff of <i>Cinema Art</i> (№ 10); Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers of the USSR and the staff of <i>Cinema Art</i> (№ 11); Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers, the staff of <i>Cinema Art</i> (№ 12).	50–66	12	K. Scherbakov	11
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The circulation of the *Cinema Art* journal (it was still published monthly) from 1986 to 1991 ranged from 48,000 to 68,000 copies. This journal reached its peak circulation of 68,000 copies in its entire history in 1990, but then it began to decline again and fell sharply by the mid-1990s.

The frequency of theoretical articles published in the *Cinema Art* during the “perestroika” period ranged from three to nineteen per year.

Thus, in the first decade of the journal's existence (1931-1941) 143 theoretical articles were published, in the second (1945-1955) – 194, in 1956-1968 – 220, in 1969-1985 – 264, in 1986–1991 – 66.

In 1986, immediately after the "perestroika" Fifth Congress of Cinematographers of the USSR, the Chief Editor of *Cinema Art* set out to change the content of the journal, but he was not destined to make any real changes: as a representative of the deposed "old guard" of cinema, he was dismissed at the end of the year, and from 1987 the chief editor was K. Shcherbakov.

Since 1989, the journal *Cinema Art* was released from the wardship of the USSR State Committee for Cinematography, and became the organ of the USSR Union of Cinematographers (since 1991 the Confederation of the Unions of Cinematographers). The circulation of the last, twelfth, Soviet issue of *Art of Cinema* in 1991 still amounted to 50,000 copies, indicating that the main audience of this periodical persisted.

On the whole, we can agree that starting around the second half of 1986, the “worldview of the *Cinema Art* changed radically. Occupying a place among the "perestroika" press, it openly demonstrated ideals of "new thinking" in ideological terms, opposed the revanchism of totalitarian forces, and in art history it actively invaded territories previously tabooed by Soviet censorship” (Shishkin, 2017: 22).

## 2. Materials and methods

*The methodology of the research* consists of the key philosophical provisions on the connection, interdependence and integrity of the phenomena of reality, the unity of the historical and social in knowledge; scientific, cinematological, sociocultural, cultural, hermeneutic, semiotic approaches, proposed in the works of leading scientists (Aristarco, 1951; Aronson, 2003; 2007; Bakhtin, 1996; Balázs, 1935; Bazin, 1971; Bessonov, 2012; Bibler, 1990; Buldakov, 2014; Casetti, 1999; Demin, 1966; Eco, 1975; 1976; Eisenstein, 1939; 1940; 1964; Gledhill, Williams, 2000; Hess, 1997; Hill, Gibson, 1998; Khrenov, 2006; 2011; Kuleshov, 1987; Lotman, 1973; 1992; 1994; Mast, Cohen, 1985; Metz, 1974; Razlogov, 1984; Sokolov, 2010; Stam, 2000; Villarejo, 2007 and others).

The project is based on the research content approach (identifying the content of the process under study taking into account the totality of its elements, the interaction between them, their nature, appeal to the facts, analysis and synthesis of theoretical conclusions, etc.), on the historical approach – consideration of the specific and historical development of the declared topic of the project.

*Research methods:* complex content analysis, comparative interdisciplinary analysis; theoretical research methods: classification, comparison, analogy, induction and deduction, abstraction and concretization, theoretical analysis and synthesis, generalization; empirical research methods: collection of information related to the project topic, comparative-historical and hermeneutical methods.

### 3. Discussion and results

*Theoretical concepts of film studies in "Cinema Art": 1986–1991*

*Politics and ideology in film studies during the 'perestroika' era (1986–1991)*

It is well known that the main "perestroika" event of 1986 was the Fifth Congress of Soviet Cinematographers, which took place in May 1986. The sensation of this congress was the alternative election of delegates to this congress, due to which many "cinematographic generals" were not elected. At the congress there were a lot of very sharp speeches for those times, which contrasted with the former order of any congresses in the era of "stagnation". In this connection the *Cinema Art* journal took an unprecedented step: almost the entire 1986 issue 10<sup>th</sup> was devoted to the Fifth Congress of Cinematographers of the USSR, and a verbatim report was published there (V..., 1986: 4-133). It is true that the film critic P. Shepotinnik wrote that this publication was made contrary to the initial opinion of the editor-in-chief Y. Cherepanov and was "forced" through the district committee of the Communist Party (Shepotinnik, 2001: 22).

Thus, if up to the summer of 1986, the political trend of the *Cinema Art* was largely unchanged from 1985, the second half of 1986 was characterized in this journal by the beginning of perestroika motifs.

For example, although the philosopher V. Tolstykh (1929–2019) began his article "Reflections on and Without Reason" (Tolstykh, 1986: 77-86) with traditional references to "the atmosphere of the country's public life by the decisions of the XXVII Congress of our Communist Party" (Tolstykh, 1986: 83), then, positively mentioning the *Road Check* and *Agony* removed from the "shelf," he moved to analyze the phenomenon of "quasi-true and sham-citizen films": "They are often called 'gray', 'mediocre', and one gets the impression that there is 'nothing wrong' with truth and modernity (content) in them, the only problem is their lack of expressiveness, spectacle, brightness (form). But the phenomenon of cinematic drabness should be assessed from the broad social point of view and the essence of drabness itself should be explained more distinctly (what is the coloring of the film out of). After all, the so-called gray and its apex name – "no movie" does not accidentally find its way onto the screen, pushing aside and overshadowing the talented works. ... Greyness in art begins with the escape from reality, from the truth of life, from the absence of position, with what, in fact, mediocrity and impersonality are seduced by" (Tolstykh, 1986: 79-80).

Fifteen years later, journalist T. Moskvina wrote that in the era of perestroika it turned out that the time "spent by the authors of the journal in a stagnant ivory tower over elegiac reflections about "what is happening to us after all" had not softened their strategic and tactical skills at all, and the fighters, hardened in the 1950–1960s, were again ready to fight. Moreover, the new generations have recruited new fighters" (Moskvina, 2001: 37).

It is clear that as the state "perestroika" developed, the political orientation of the articles in the *Cinema Art* became more and more acute. And very quickly a certain kind of disappointment in the ideals and, most importantly, in the results of the perestroika tendencies began to set in.

Thus, in 1989 film historian V. Fomin argued that "we still do not have a clear understanding of the degree of decline of our cinema, comforting, reassuring ourselves that we made great films in the years of stagnation. It was and still is affected by the inertia of the wonderful 5<sup>th</sup> Congress of Cinematographers which became a congress of merciless criticism of *Goskino* and the former leadership of the Creative Union, but, alas, did not become a congress of self-criticism and repentance of filmmakers themselves. In the sense that most of the energy was spent on fair denunciations of the Feldfelb barracks management of cinema and practically did not extend to the state of affairs in the realm of creativity itself. But was it really all right here? An endless stream of serials, stillborn masterpieces of the untouchables and the like conspicuous phenomena have somehow for a long time overshadowed other, less obvious, but perhaps even more serious manifestations of a profound crisis. Meanwhile, it is naive to think that the suffocation of the stagnant era had an effect only on the most mundane strata of our cinematography and the work of former cinematic generals. Our avant-garde cinema, which we always deeply revered as the most advanced, the most serious, the most searching, turned out to be in a bad zone, however bitter it may be to admit it" (Fomin, 1989: 78).

Further, V. Fomin rightly wrote that "in the midst of stagnation, not only any genuine artistic movement, but even the slightest movement in this sense was perceived with grateful awe and reverence. One wanted to support every modest innovation immediately and enthusiastically – the general background was so bleak and joyless. Where other searches and innovations could lead

to in the end, since they (according to the laws of dialectics) must have a downside – who had a headache then? One of the greatest and most bitter losses for which we are now paying is the psychological cinema of human studies, which has practically sunk into oblivion. Where has it all gone? In today's films—even in the best, most significant and interesting ones... We are no longer faced with the man himself, shown with the completeness and complexity possible for the screen, but with the notorious human factor” (Fomin 1989: 79).

Evaluating Soviet "perestroika cinematography" V. Fomin regretfully noted that in the second half of the 1980s, "things were becoming more and more complicated and pretentious. A kind of stylistic bodybuilding began to develop and become fashionable when the director, assuming spectacular poses and effusively playing with pumped-up muscles, flaunted his mastery of all manner of stylistic manners, bombarded the viewer with all his thoroughness and observation, without having in mind any serious analytical task. The infinity of stylizing tricks has confused not only masters such as V. Naumov, S. Solovyov and A. Khamrayev. It is indicative that R. Balayan who started with works of rather strict and quite "loaded" style eventually sailed to the camp of "bodybuilders" as well. ... Good plans of perestroika will remain on paper if they proceed only from the notorious "human factor" and do not rely on a sober and complete knowledge of a real man” (Fomin, 1989: 85, 87).

In fact, film critic A. Plakhov agreed with many of Fomin's conclusions, arguing that “along with perestroika the debate about postmodernism reached our cinematic brethren as well. ... The stigma of eclecticism, heavy-handedness, and inner aesthetic unfreedom lies, as a rule, even with the best of [Soviet films]. The only lightness that is available to us is the lightness of self-deception. All of us, not having suffered a new faith, were instantly christened and became postmodernists” (Plakhov 1990: 43).

Film scholar E. Gromov (1931–2005) opined that during the perestroika era, even the best Soviet films “are often uncompetitive compared to Western films, especially American ones. We console ourselves with the notion that, while losing out in spectacular fascination, the leading Soviet films are rich in ideas. Isn't it time to abandon these rosy illusions, recognizing that sometimes we yield to the West in terms of the philosophical and moral richness of our screen pictures? ... Certainly, the social and critical direction in our cinema will develop and strengthen. Our cinema is destined to debunk those rosy-conformist myths that it has assiduously implanted. In military terms, this is both a tactical and a strategic task. However, one should not forget that next to it, within it, another goal flickers: artistic synthesis, the imaginative assertion of a positive beginning, which also meets deep social needs” (Gromov, 1989: 25, 27).

At the turn of the 1990s, literary critic and film critic S. Rassadin (1935–2012) decided to defend the cinema (and not only) "sixties", which, in fact, initially led the perestroika. He argued that “the greatest sin of the 1960s was that they placed the 'mission of truth in art'. That they believed in the impossible (and unnecessary!): ...poking poor Mariya Ivanovna in E.M. Remarque and torturing a policeman with Hemingway, believing that "they would become more moral". ... While "in a normal democratic society" everyone must do strictly his own thing. ... Scathing is contagious, one always wants to match it sweepingly, but I will restrain myself. I will limit myself to the timid assumption that the decisive scheme of "normal democratic society" reminds me in some way of the crystallized states of Orwell and Zamyatin's "We". In what way? Perhaps because art, jealously guarded (and in fact excommunicated) from the aforementioned most important qualities, here appears as if it were a special ration given to a very select few, or "a game of beads" (Rassadin, 1990: 29-30).

S. Rassadin wrote with insightful bitterness that “with such a disposition of the cards, art is assigned a seemingly independent role, but in essence a most pitiful one. ... And the cult of self-sufficiency, like any cult, like any limitation, is anti-democratic... Self-sufficiency within oneself is really self-satisfaction. The most hopeless of dead ends, because it is the coziest of them all” (Rassadin, 1990: 30).

Concern for the disturbing tendencies in Soviet cinema at the turn of the 1990s was also expressed in the article by the film critic S. Dobrotvorsky (1959–1997) (Dobrotvorsky, 1991: 25-29).

S. Dobrotvorsky wrote justifiably and provably that “looking back at the path traversed since the fateful Fifth Congress of the USSR Filmmakers, it is easy to see that cinema rushed into the Perestroika scorcher "ahead of the Fatherland". Many processes peculiar to the society as a whole surfaced there before in other fields of economy or culture, although the routes and stages were the same: repentance, rehabilitation of the shelf fund, western interest backed by prestigious festival

awards, de-ideologization and privatization, free market. The early consequences of these long-awaited changes were also reaped by cinema with the rest of the country: the dominance of "black movies" and cheap cooperative products, non-convertibility on the real foreign market and noncompetitiveness on the domestic market, the collapse of production and financial deficit" (Dobrotvorsky, 1991: 25).

S. Dobrotvorsky further noted so rightly that in Soviet cinema of the perestroika era "the new mythology is introduced ... no longer episodically, but by the very structure of a 're-personalized' existence. A radical change takes place in the model itself: the infantile-collectivist archetype is replaced by an individualist one: the "mass hero" in life and on the screen gives way to the solitary hero, the principle "all for one" is replaced by the principle "one against all. ... The genre, which had previously been an expensive and rare toy for us, puts forward its own canons – pictorial, narrative, moral and ethical – at every step. Departure from any of them leads to a dilution of the whole system, while Soviet directors, brought up in an ideological incubator, consider deviating from the canon by any means as the highest valor. Replicating repetitive, well-fashioned examples of grassroots mythological cinema seems to them either too easy or too embarrassing. Although, as it turns out, it is not shameful and, more importantly, not simple, because it requires, first, means, and, second, a normal, unambitious craft" (Dobrotvorsky, 1991: 27).

Separately, S. Dobrotvorsky dwells on the problems of Soviet "auteur cinema," arguing that it had essentially lost its authentic auteurism, as it had been reduced to two pronounced "pseudo-auteur" tendencies: "the first is 'blackness,' a dystopian statement of the hopelessness of general life, a voluptuous cowering in the physiological stratum. ... The second, no less common, motif is the Apocalypse, the end of the world, the universal exodus. Ecological, moral, social, but again, inevitable for everyone... At the same time, "blackness" is eschatological, while the end of the world is black to the point of no return, because both camouflage the confusion and helplessness of the prophets in their land which has gone crazy with freedom. All told, what emerges is a rather monstrous picture. Mutations of imperial cinema produce bastard genre hybrids. The authors preach the end of the world over nothing. Somewhere to the side the "parallelists" frolic, stipulating their right to life after death and not missing a chance at looting" (Dobrotvorsky, 1991: 27).

Film critic S. Lavrentiev agrees with the negative evaluation of the situation in Soviet cinema of the turn of the 1990s: "Why did Soviet cinema, which had existed more or less comfortably, pass away so prematurely? Why did not it wait at least until the Union of the Unbreakable formally disappeared? Why did it not breathe in the "fresh wind of change" that every filmmaker could have sung the classic "I've been wanting it for a long time"? After all, up until the Fifth Congress of Filmmakers – it seemed to us in the heat of the moment – Soviet cinema had not lived at all. Everything talented was stifled and silenced, Bondarchuk with Matveyev and Ozerov with Levchuk reigned supreme on the screen, and the viewer's masses felt deprived of Buñuel and Cocteau almost every second. ... And only now I hear from the most knowledgeable people a strange, paradoxical and, in my opinion, utterly true statement: "The closed cinematography of a closed country is the only possible situation for the existence of Soviet cinema". How could this be? Dramas of artists, misunderstanding of the audience, idiocy of bosses... Is this ideal?! Yes, it is" (Lavrentiev, 1991: 106).

S. Lavrentiev further recalled that during the first stage of cinema perestroika, "the new cinema authorities acted as if ... there was a certain abstract 'Soviet spectator' languishing in anticipation of *Short Sightings* and *Long Goodbyes*, *Seven Samurai* and *Eight and a Half*. These complex and thoughtful films were screened in cinemas of thousands of people and were offered to the attention of the outskirts of the country. But the hooligans didn't suffer for long. Right at that moment, the hometown Komsomol decided to become the country's main video pirate. A network of stuffy salons spread all over the country with unusual speed" (Lavrentiev, 1991: 111-112), and, of course, shows of stolen Western entertainment films were a great success.

C. Lavrentiev also drew attention to another important trend of the second half of cinema perestroika: "There was an event that turned the confrontation of ideas into a confrontation of actions. Worked all-Union film markets. ... The idea of educating the masses vanished at once. What, right, education, when the distributors pay money and want them to return a hundredfold! ... A mass of independent companies arose. Russian Bombay" (Lavrentiev, 1991: 113) of low-brow entertainment productions began to play, sparkle, sing, run...

*Theory and history of cinematography*  
*History of Soviet film classics*

The perestroika period was characterized by a radical rethinking of Soviet film classics.

Thus V. Kiselev wrote in the *Cinema Art* that “the creative drama of Eisenstein, as well as many prominent minds of his generation, was due to ... utopian ideas about the Temple of social harmony, which would ensure the happiness of mankind, the 'kingdom of freedom. In attempting to realize utopia and often without considering the real moral price that had to be paid for this or that victory, we deified the state... [and] the ability of the concrete individual to perceive rationally, to determine what was happening in reality, was effectively blocked by the "collective unconscious," when it became possible to manipulate man, his thoughts, his feelings, his freedom unhindered. As a result, socialism, which in its idea is thought of as a stage in the humanization of reality, in the Stalinist interpretation was distorted and took on an entirely different shape, giving us examples of the ruthless suppression of the human person. Such questions as good and evil, the search for the meaning of life, freedom, human rights, ensuring dignity and honor, etc., were discarded by official ideology as alien to the proletarian consciousness, and humanism, under the pretext of its abstractness, was relegated to bourgeois values” (Kiselev, 1988: 5-7).

Reflections on S. Eisenstein's role in the film process and in society were continued by film scholar E. Levin (1935–1991): “The fate of the fathers of Soviet art is tragic. One of them – exactly Eisenstein – was given courage at the critical moment to refuse the role of an obedient victim obediently going to the slaughter, and in the role of a tragic hero, played perfectly and worthily, to bring tragedy to the surface... Of course, we have no right to judge, because, as you know, you cannot demand heroism from others. But one rereads the transcripts and one is filled with longing and bitterness again” (Levin, 1991: 92).

The film critic L. Mamatova (1935–1996), who was formerly completely dependent on Marxist-Leninist ideology and the canons of socialist realism, quickly "readjusted" and began to analyze Soviet cinematography from the opposite angle. She pointed to a film trend that intensified by the late 1930s: “Symmetry symbolizing order is on the rise in frame composition. Increasingly hard and glossy becomes the texture that dominates the interiors. The mise-en-scenes become increasingly static, the figures of the actors, especially the party leaders, immobilized and shot from a low position, become more statuarial. The architecture of the buildings, preferred in their urban exterior, becomes more and more pompous and heavy. More and more organized is the behavior of the masses, the ideal of which is thought to be a string, a column, a parade, filmed from above. White shirts and blouses of workers and peasants, white uniforms of aviators, white clothes of those marching on Red Square become more and more predominant. White begins to dominate in interiors (drapes, tablecloths), in landscapes (curly clouds, blooming gardens). Visual series increasingly expresses the idea of the beauty of life, regulated in everything, and the unshakable power of the existing order of things. ... The visuals duplicate the meaning of the dialogues and, conversely, the film chews up and chews up its unpretentious ideas so that the viewer has no choice but to swallow them. Associative editing – the pride of Soviet cinema in the 1920s – created complex, vaguely stirring images whose content did not lend itself to full verbal interpretation and censorship. In the 1930s, he was pushed aside by primitive logical montage, merely meshing fragments into a linear and sequential plot. Its rhythm increasingly loses its complexity, merely alternating long chunks depicting verbal debates at meetings or individual conversations with repeatedly short chunks of marching-parades or feverishly rapid labor” (Mamatova, 1990: 111). She further noted that in a number of Soviet films of the late 1930s a kind of religious images of deified leaders appear, but at the same time embodying ideals opposed to Christianity (Mamatova, 1991: 93).

Film scholar Y. Bogomolov, also referring to his analysis of Soviet cinematography of the 1930s, wrote that the "great terror" “demanded not just big lies, but new mythology and new folklore. This was the task that the left-wing revolutionary art began to address in the 1930s. Art had not only to embellish reality, to conceal something, but also to invent something; it had to fall into ecstasy over all kinds of significant and insignificant occasions of the mythological past, the mythological present and the mythological future: the accomplished revolution, the victorious outcome of the Civil War, the sweep of collectivization, the scale of industrialization, and finally, the coming triumph of communism. The situation looks as follows: the left revolutionary artist (by another definition, the innovator), having struggled with tradition and the collective-mythological subconscious, is then strung up by socialist realism and thrown into a new social mythology. Creating a new legendary reality in which the revolution's prophets, apostles, knights-in-arms, their squires, enemies, demons, new people, new morals, new enemies, new demons, etc. coexisted, the artist was doomed to self-denial, to transform his "I" into a mythological "we". This

was not without inner resistance. Its traces can be seen in almost all of the most significant films of the time. ... The Soviet cinema of the 1930s–1940s and partly of the 1950s was a mysterious structure, majestic and pitiful at the same time; it was made of papier-mache, but something alive was hiding in its recesses” (Bogomolov, 1989: 59-60).

One can agree with Y. Bogomolov that in the Soviet cinema of those years, “the world is overturned – what was considered a superstructure takes on the significance of the base, and what was called the base turns out to be a completely ghostly superstructure. In a word, ideological aims look more like a material reality than the means of production combined with commodities. This is why the resounding declaration of the growth of the working people's prosperity did not need concrete examples of this prosperity: it did not need material proof. It was self-sufficient evidence. Here is also the reason why films like *The Pig and the Shepherd*, *The Tractor Drivers*, and *The Rich Bride* did not seem like a mockery of their own real-life experience to the peasants who had lived through the nightmare of collectivization. One's own poverty was not considered a reality. The material reality was the screen image of abundance” (Bogomolov, 1989: 61).

Y. Bogomolov also argued that “the history of Soviet cinema of the 1920s and 1930s is a direct reflection of the confrontation not so much of the avant-garde artist and the command-administrative system as of the artistic and mythological consciousness. The confrontation was unequal, but real. Partly for this reason, the plot of the history of Soviet cinema of these largely contrasting decades was confusing and dramatic. The 1920's are considered the golden age of our cinema, and that cannot be taken away, no matter what we have to think and read today about the controversial effects of October and the Civil War. There is no getting away from the fact that *Battleship Potemkin* is a great film” (Bogomolov, 1990: 85).

M. Yampolsky, a film scholar and culture expert, writes that in the 1930s Soviet film mythology “was quite effective and ensured the success of films because it corresponded to viewer expectations and social myths in the broad sense of the word. ... Like almost any contemporary mythological scheme that grew out of biblical tradition, the myth of the 1930s necessarily postulated a certain bright, conflict-free future, a golden age, the elimination of all contradictions in the long term. Obtaining this “magical gift of the future” required the sacrifice of the hero and his initiation into the rank of the worthy. The hero was brought to the forefront and underwent tests - battles with the enemy (White Guards or pests, who personified all the evil in the world), struggle with the elements (a typical initiation motif), fire (in industrial films), earth (in collective farm films), water (motif of flood, deluge, polar voyage, etc.) and air (aviation films). This ensured the final idyll (the apotheosis of many films) and the affirmation of the hero as savior, liberator, demigod, man of the future”.

“Such mythology, – M. Yampolsky continued, – was of course used to assert the ideology of the cult with its characteristic myth of the superhero, the sacrifice, the eternal personal feat ensuring universal prosperity in the future. But it also fully reflected the pathos of popular belief in the rapid and miraculous advent of a golden age. It also justified exorbitant human sacrifices: only a “magic sacrifice” in the mythological context could bring the earthly paradise closer. It is extremely important that this mythology was rooted in the most archaic layers of people's consciousness, in archetypes. It would not be an exaggeration to say that this mythology in a modified form is preserved in our current films in the categories of the hero-victim, the deliverer from the boss's office, in the categories of fighting the elements even where modern production and agriculture are concerned. We will not dwell on how harmful or useful this mythology is (for me personally, it does much more harm than good). Let us only note its diminishing correspondence to the social “mythology” of today. Fewer and fewer people believe in magical possibilities for achieving a bright future, especially at the cost of permanent sacrifice. Thank God, the belief in a heroic messiah has evaporated. Less and less popular is the belief in the effectiveness of the struggle against nature, understood today in a completely different way within the framework of a new ecological consciousness” (Yampolsky, 1988: 92-93).

In addition, M. Yampolsky rather paradoxically thinks that in the 1930s the following scheme predominated in Soviet cinematography: the artist, undertaking the reflection of life in art, at the first stage encounters certain norms that restrain him – the form, the language; he heroically battles with norms and overcomes them through an almost mystical merger with the vital element of life in all its diversity. Censorship thus acts as a carrier of this vital element, a heroic fighter against the drying pressure of the norm. Censorship takes on amazingly vital functions – hence the thundering of the censorship carnivals and all this sophisticated therapy for the artist, as if



intended to bring him back to life. Formalism penetrates the artist's pores as soon as he shuts himself up within the walls of his study, within the walls of the film studio, where the artistic tradition and the continuity of the artistic language reign. A withdrawal "in a shell" is unequivocally understood as formalism. Formalism can be overcome by a fierce love for life. Censorship becomes a fierce preacher of this love of life, which partly explains its noisy and collective ritual. The artist is thus extracted from formalistic solitude, publicly engaged with reality. Public torture begins to claim the status of an invigorating therapy, and in the ultimate case, a movement from death to life. ... The many years of activity of our life-affirming censorship has also left a deep imprint on contemporary cinematic consciousness with its tendency toward the epic, its discourse on 'images' and 'synthesis', its fear of formalism, its search for 'living' and 'full-blooded' characters, its contempt for professionalism and the undying idea of a mandatory balance of good and evil" (Yampolsky, 1990: 98-99, 104).

Talking about the history of Soviet cinema of the second half of the 1940s and the early 1950s, film critic E. Levin (1935–1991) reasonably noted that “poor picture-making was 'theoretically' justified by people who sternly instilled that the root cause of all failures and mishaps – it is chaos, the elements, unpredictability, variety and multiplicity of life (in this case – the cinematic), it is the possibility of choice and independent decision (the screenwriter, director, studio). Once you streamline the chaos, tame and discipline the elements, introduce a precise conveyerized thematic plan, introduce uniformity and, above all, make the film economy easily observable... – the problem will simplify to the point where it simply disappears: the few uncontrollably talented and tireless screenwriters will begin to reliably deliver only full-fledged scripts year after year (how could they not, for levity and irresponsibility are now ruled out), the provenly gifted directors from the irreversibly large will conscientiously, blessing the perfect conveyor belt, put in solidly outstanding films..., and all that remains is to extol the wisdom of the leader who has firmly traced the path from victory to victory with a steady hand. As we know, none of this hard-won idea worked, the plans were not fulfilled, the writers did not save, the assembly line was in turmoil, things in our cinema in the late 1940s and early 1950s were getting worse and worse, the film production was coming to naught. But the ones to blame for the collapse of this barbaric, anti-cultural utopia were, of course, the filmmakers, who were maliciously and ungratefully unworthy of the attention and care shown to them. And when fiction was still being imposed and one managed to declare something (the number of films allowed) as world masterpieces, the "enemies" (those capable of evaluating works professionally) were already discovered: they had long been engaged in sabotage and were subject to immediate neutralization as detractors, slanderers and organized criminals” (Levin, 1990: 98).

One of the most interesting articles on the history of Soviet cinema in the *Cinema Art* journal in the perestroika period is N. Klimontovich's (1951–2015) article "They are like spies" (Klimontovich, 1990: 113-122).

Here N. Klimontovich convincingly proved that in the Soviet era “the forces of evil were divided into internal and external enemies. The latter, understandably, dwelt directly in hell, in the capitalist West, whose last circle was America. Inner enemies, on the other hand, appeared on the scene as carriers of "remnants" of the past, being some relics from "before the creation of the world," incorporeal spirits of an extra-historical past, living dead, They take on the guise of a white officer, who has miraculously not been unmasked, that is, not been driven to his place of permanent residence in the other world, or an undead bourgeois (and here, as usual, the language is not mistaken – the bourgeois is undermined, that is, undead, like a vampire). The whole system, therefore, did not accentuate the differences between place and time, geography and history: both the pre-revolutionary past and the space lying beyond the Western border were hell. The Soviet paradise, on the other hand, was situated in a relatively narrow space-time platform: the present in the USSR. But while the hell of the past and the West was associated with primordial chaos, the Soviet paradise was open to the future and the cosmos. Since the mythologem reached a particular tension when the borderline of this and that world was the Ocean of the World, the epithet "beyond the Ocean" in the Soviet lexicon unambiguously denoted belonging to the center of world evil, and films about America and Americans took their necessary place in the stream of propaganda films” (Klimontovich, 1990: 115).

N. Klimontovich rightly stressed that in the 1930s “with a few exceptions (say, in Dovzhenko's film *the Disguised Samurai*) it was a question of unmasking the enemy 'inside' – the outsider from beyond history, the living dead of the past. And if at the show trials such an

enemy was also accused of cooperation with foreign intelligence services, it meant only that the authorities fabricating the accusation stated the indispensable connection between the hell of the past and the hell of abroad, that is, the unity of the myth in the end” (Klimontovich, 1990: 117).

In the post-war period, the emphasis in Soviet cinema is more “on the external enemy, to whom the unknown Enemy people within the country’ were only fastened ... nevertheless the external enemy retained some of the mythological traits of Stalinist socialist realism. And above all his otherworldly essence, that is, werewolfism. The spy could be mistaken for a humble Soviet employee, an accountant, ... for a heroic front-line soldier... Moreover, the vigilant hero sooner or later discerned the smell of sulfur emanating from the enemy – certain vibes of bourgeois ideology, which were the most dangerous, since as a rule the spy had no other goals than “to influence” and to corrupt. Or had rather absurd ones. ... Thus the spy films of the 1950s were merely propaganda pacifiers that had lost their mythological attributes” (Klimontovich, 1990: 118).

Turning to the period of “film stagnation”, N. Klimontovich wrote that during this period “there is, of course, no “Brezhnev mythology” to speak of. Just as there is no longer any “people” in Brezhnev’s “counter-propaganda” movies. The people had lost any cohesion, disintegrated into separate individuals... The movie that emerges on Brezhnev’s “political” screen is striking precisely because of its brutal realism: no one ever emigrates from America to the USSR, save for two misguided agents recruited not through the force of Soviet ideology but through the charms of Russian women... On the contrary, every now and then someone tries to flee from the Brezhnev USSR; another thing is that the tempted defectors will inevitably be disappointed abroad, the Americans will deceive them... This is the whole myth. And if one were to look for causes [in the 1990s] of mass emigration and the high prestige among schoolchildren of such gainful professions as a peddler or a foreign currency prostitute, in comparison, say, with a cosmonaut or a ballerina, one would do well not to forget to mention the Brezhnevite ‘counterpropaganda’ cinema production” (Klimontovich, 1990: 120).

N. Klimontovich is also the author of a historical review of the love theme in Soviet cinema (Klimontovich, 1988: 87).

Among the notable publications on the history of Soviet cinema one may refer, perhaps, to the article by the film critic M. Chernenko (1931–2004) on the typology, ideology, and mythology of the concert film (Chernenko, 1990: 94-102).

#### *Theoretical Concepts*

The theoretical articles in the *Cinema Art* were already largely cleared of the stamps of the ideological rhetoric of past years.

Of course, at the beginning of Perestroika it was still possible to publish cautious articles about the fact that “many proponents of a superficial, truncated conception of the screenplay often invoked their own meaningless formula of ‘auteur cinema’ to justify their position. True ‘auteur cinema’ is a long and noble cinematic tradition of a complex unity of creative individualities which permits the merging of different film professions in one person only when this is due to the master’s versatile talents” (Weisfeld, 1986: 128).

Or, in the spirit of the early 1980s, to argue that “the artist has the right to choose one aspect or another, and to base his or her concept upon it. But it is not right to do so by distorting the correlation of things and, ultimately, historical truth. It is peculiar to our ideological opponents to represent “Russians” as opera villains or fools in their cheap propaganda “shows”. Why should we stoop to such a level... Separation of propaganda from art, exaggeration of one and belittling of another ends in failure. Even if it is not noticed for a long time, it is not registered” (Kuchkina, 1987: 10).

However, at the end of the 1980s the tone and freedom of expression in theoretical articles was already different.

For example, the film scholar V. Demin (1937–1993) was convinced that “the lessons of our recent history prove beyond any doubt that the greatest successes fall to the artist when he meets a social need, when his work has a real novelty – the novelty of the theme or hero, the novelty of the author’s thought or world outlook” (Demin, 1988: 4). And here “the so-called ‘poetic cinema’ deserves a special talk. ... this stream of our cinema was ruined by persecutions and obstacles, which for some reason were erected with special care in its path. The bureaucrat was afraid that connecting the artist to the world of distant poetic associations gave him the freedom not controlled by paragraphs. By showing this or that, what did he want to say? A montage by meaning, a montage by chronology of events keeps the director in check. Montage by association makes his

criminal intentions elusive, and that every creative person has such intentions, the bureaucrat never doubted” (Demin, 1988: 18).

In our opinion, V. Demin was overly optimistic and somewhat naïve in his hopes for a certain triumph of the new cinematic way of thinking: “This thinking is social, all-planetary and historical. It is a thinking that is not afraid of contradictions. Instead of the principle of the mentor's monologue, it offers the principle of an equal dialogue. It is pluralistic thinking, which resolutely fights against the notion of hierarchy in art. It is a way of thinking that is open to both gaiety and the saddest colors, to farce and profound tragedy. This way of thinking sees a person as a human being, a person as a personality. This thinking does not scare sensuality and eroticism, as you can not scare the metaphorical, allegorical forms of storytelling. This thinking is democratic” (Demin, 1988: 21). As we know, this theoretical approach was further completely refuted by the entire practice of cinema development...

In contrast to V. Demin, also in 1988, M. Yampolsky, a culturologist and film critic, did not countenance this kind of cinematic thinking, but rather convincingly pointed out that “in Soviet cinema a pole of high artistic cinematography exists, but entertainment, mass cinema, cultivated primarily by professionals of a lower class, is extremely underrepresented. This situation can be easily explained by the national tradition, which has a stronger disdain for grassroots culture than anywhere else. The bulk of film production is unattractive to either a connoisseur of art or a lover of entertainment. In terms of viewer preference, the majority of Soviet films are films for no one. This paradoxical situation is also reflected in the genre structure of the Soviet cinema, which became habitual for us, but essentially surprising. The absence of commercial cinema also reflected in the absence of “normal” film genres in our repertoire. Our cinema education is ‘genreless’ in the strict sense of the word, and this is its fundamental difference from world cinema” (Yampolsky, 1988: 88).

Continuing his reflections, M. Yampolsky wrote that “it seems to filmmakers that the unattractiveness of our cinema is linked to the absence of a hero they need, or to the weakness of the film's intrigue, or to the insufficient urgency of the problems raised. And even if there is some truth in this (there's no denying that our scripts are really not up to par), the very statement of the problem is very eloquent. It is the word but not the image that is responsible for the flaws in our cinema. I personally have never had to hear anyone complain about a lack of cinematic language. ... The influence of the domestic cultural tradition, which is primarily oriented toward the word, is reflected in all this. ... This attitude is certainly reflected in the problems of mass cinematography. It seems to me that the audience's success of a film is primarily predetermined by the film's ability to have a hypnotic, sensual impact on the audience. But the literary components of a film are the least capable of creating this hypnotic effect” (Yampolsky, 1988: 89).

In this connection, M. Yampolsky came to the conclusion that “the predominance of the mythological in mass cinematography challenges the opinion, which is characteristic of us, that one can attract a wide audience only by deepening the psychological complexity of the characters and by increasing the social gravity of films. ... And although cinema around the world partly relies on the discovery of new material, the key to viewer success still lies elsewhere. Strong film genres – westerns, thrillers, sci-fi – always rely on ‘strong’ myths” (Yampolsky, 1988: 92-93).

Analyzing the cinematic situation in the USSR in the late 1980s, M. Yampolsky rightly stressed that “the old mythology of national cinema came into sharp conflict with the new youth culture that cultivated (whether we like it or not) completely different myths... about which, unfortunately, we know very little. It follows that to keep the old mythological grid of coordinates unchanged inevitably leads our cinema to isolation from the most active part of the young audience. In the context of our observations, it is also significant that myth is also connected to irrational elements in our psyche, those structures that we still do not want to know about, relying entirely on the power of our rationality. ... It is important to understand that cinema is not only the hero, the plot and the conflict transferred to film, but that it is the movement of light, space, the acoustic environment, the face and the body on the screen. Only by assimilating these simple truths and understanding the underlying mechanisms of cinematography can our filmmaking finally create films that are interesting to the audience” (Yampolsky, 1988: 92-93).

Reflecting on the social status of the cinematographer and cinematographic consciousness, M. Yampolsky ruthlessly pointed out that in the USSR of the late 1990s “a person who claims to be an artist... has to fight for this title with a kind of special fierceness. As a result, it is in our cinematography that such an ugly phenomenon emerges: the opposition between authorly artistic

and "elitist" cinema and mass productions. ... A master who is trying to regain his freedom is inclined to strongly emphasize his opposition to standardized production, to declare his disregard for the box office, and sometimes even for the audience. Our "elitist" filmmakers belong to that unique category of filmmakers who completely ignore their audience. ... To establish himself as an artist, a cinematographer has to turn to more pathetic justifications: to tell people the truth, to teach them about life, to uncover the essence of being, etc. Of course, in this there is a domestic tradition, but not only. This exaltation in assessing one's own mission is a direct consequence of the undervalued social status of the profession as a whole. As a result, we have a group of craftsmen at one pole and a group of prophets, "geniuses" and thought leaders at the other. The crisis of our cinematography is largely connected with the fact that there is a void between these two poles" (Yampolsky, 1990: 33-34).

Film critic A. Shemyakin discusses transformations of the "Russian idea" in Soviet cinema and in society at large, recalling that "over the past twenty years cinema has not succumbed to the temptation to create a mythology of the "Russian idea", but has simply analyzed its manifestations. ... It so happened that for those who were making national history the most typical principle was: first to do and then, decades later, to ponder in horror and melancholy the consequences of their deeds, discarding the past experience as something completely alien to the "pure soul of the people". And now they talk about the need for a spiritual revolution. Although, in my opinion, it is necessary to have the courage to take a sober look at our own history and to abandon the concept of social messianism – we have long been not the first" and is hardly "the best. That is when national messianism will slowly but surely be eradicated. However, this is also an illusion" (Shemyakin 1989: 51).

Film historian E. Levin (1935–1991) stressed that the artist's consciousness is not one-dimensional or linear: it cannot be broken down into separate components, or undesirable ones – "titanic-magical," irrational, subconscious, elemental, mythological - in order to leave only reliable, rational, well-ordered, loyal, and in advance agreed with universal moral norms. Is creativity a pedantic illustration of these norms? No, it is their constant questioning, testing, confirmation and affirmation, each time anew, not by a quotation from a moral code or a reference to eternal precepts, but by means of a conflictual comparison with the historical existence of humanity, in a passionate dialogue of morality and life in which the artist is involved... Here the life and creative experience of the founders of Soviet cinema is also irreplaceable and cannot be discarded: Without thinking it through in a new way and experiencing it, without gathering the ashes and preserving the fire, we might think of ourselves as possessors of complete truth, free of illusion and delusion, imagining ourselves as sterilely pure in thought and action" (Levin, 1989: 79).

Film scholar Y. Bogomolov also reflected on the literary-centrism of Soviet cinema to the detriment of entertainment: "The idea that a relationship between literature and entertainment forms is possible on the basis of bilateral reciprocity and aesthetic equality does not easily make its way into theory. There is a cornerstone stumbling block on the way: literary-centrism" (Bogomolov, 1987: 93). In particular, Y. Bogomolov accused of this kind of literary centrism the theoretical concept of the book "What is Hecuba to Us" by the former editor-in-chief of the *Cinema Art* E. Surkov (Surkov, 1987).

Soon E. Surkov (1915–1988) published a response article in which he, sharply objecting to Y. Bogomolov, wrote that "with such a lack of feeling for the word and, consequently, of literary illiteracy, it is somehow awkward to attempt to judge interpretations of the classics on the screen. Awkward. You cannot judge what you do not know, do not understand, and do not hear" (Surkov 1988: 62).

And in 1991, perhaps for the first time, a collection of theoretical articles based on gender material, in this case on "Woman and Cinema", appeared in the *Cinema Art* journal.

Film scholar and culture expert M. Turovskaya (1924–2019) pointed out to readers that "the male, paternalistic – aka sacral – beginning remains dominant in Soviet films where the Woman – the most emancipated in the world, recognized as a 'work unit' and defeating her male rivals – nevertheless acts as a passive, executor in relation to the supreme will of God the Father. Such are the main features of one of the fundamental Soviet female myths, where there is no place for ambiguous seductions of femme fatale and eroticism, and the patriarchal family, if it is destroyed with the emancipation of women, is collectivistically restored at higher levels of unity in the state-religion" (Turovskaya, 1991: 137).

However, film historian L. Mamatova (1935–1996) wrote in this context: “Did cinema art in the totalitarian era only propagandize the robotization of man? Could it be that all that was predestined for women on the screen was hard work, trapping vermin, and ersatz love? There had to be another kind of cinema. Yes, there was. It would be naive, of course, to suppose that a work which was crudely censored – from the score to the finished film – could express any kind of coherent resistance to Stalinism, at a time when the authorities controlled the print run, the form of distribution and the press response to the film. Open criticism of Stalin and his order was ruled out. But the dissent with the ideology and psychology of the regime came in another form. Whether it was clearly conscious or intuitive is difficult to say now, for this still have to look carefully into the spiritual and moral evolution of each artist. For now it is important to establish that against all odds it existed. And it affected first of all... in films about love! In pictures that did not claim a central place in the ideological and thematic repertoire approved by the leadership. They were modestly placed on the sidelines, often in the category of everyday life” (Mamatova, 1991: 117).

#### *Cinema and the spectator*

Referring to the rather traditional topic of "Cinema and Spectator" for the *Cinema Art* journal, film scholar M. Zak (1929–2011) opined that “if previously most often resorted to incantations like 'the spectator wants' or 'the spectator does not want', now the analytical stage has obviously arrived. Meanwhile, there are examples of other solutions. They create special "spectacle" associations at studios (as if the rest of the films could be exempted from this quality). ... Let us repeat: the cinematic cycle does not end in the auditorium, but it begins there. Mass consciousness, in one form or another, rightfully claims authorship. However, the "screening of consciousness" is an extremely complex creative act that is far from a mirror image. This does not diminish the need for its close study on the basis of the search for new art historical methods” (Zak, 1988: 81).

Film historian V. Fomin once again reminded that cinema spectator's "folklore taste" is brought up not only by folklore itself, but it is as if it is primordial in our consciousness itself. For "folklore taste" is primary, natural taste incorporated in us by culture itself. And that is why practically any person, even without being in any way or only indirectly attached to the language of traditional folklore, responds so easily and naturally to the folklore impulse sent to him by the work of modern professional art. That is why an artist, who does not even think about any conscious orientation towards folklore, can suddenly "produce" a work in a completely folkloric spirit (Fomin, 1988: 97).

Film critic and sociologist I. Levshina (1932–2009), based on the results of her research, noted that “by the mid-1980s many subtle trends had taken shape in the way cinema was perceived that fundamentally and dramatically changed its life. The seemingly eternal position of cinema in public consciousness was under threat. It ceased to be "the most popular". It is no longer "the most beloved"; it has ceased to be "the master of minds"; it is losing its leadership position among young viewers, its most devoted supporter of late. The habitual ways of organizing the creative process, the ways of bringing films to the audience, the ways of promoting films – all this, formed under completely different conditions of life in cinema yesterday, became the "outstretched heel" with which we have long tried to stop the negative phenomena or, rather, to shield ourselves from the objective processes of artistic life in society. ... Cinematographers, first and foremost creative workers, preferred to attribute the facts of non-contact with the public that came to the surface, as a rule, only to the bad work of cinematography” (Levshina, 1986: 73).

I. Levshina based on statistical data points out that young spectators of the mid-1980s, fond of rock and pop music and the first fruits of the "video age," were far from frequenting cinemas (Levshina, 1986: 74).

In his discussions within the framework of "Cinema and the Spectator" the culturologist and film scholar M. Yampolsky believed that “film theory proceeds from the fact that the commercial success of a film is conditioned by its ability to bring a particular 'pleasure' to the spectator. Behind this far from theoretical notion is the work of complex cinematic mechanisms. For example, the mechanism of identification. ... We often proceed from the outdated notion that the viewer identifies himself with the hero of the film and that is all. But today we can consider it proven that identification has a two-stage character. Science distinguishes between "primary identification," which establishes the viewer's psychological connection to the screen spectacle as a whole, and "secondary identification" with the character. At the same time, secondary identification is effectively carried out only on the basis of primary identification. In order to project one's "I" onto the character, the viewer must first be absorbed into the world of the film. ... The conditions for the

realization [of primary identification] include the darkness of the auditorium, the flickering source of light overhead – that is, the components of any movie session that create the preconditions for the viewer's immersion into that half-sleep state that characterizes the normal perception of a film. But these components are not the only ones. We are talking about sensual, "phenomenal" contact with the world on the screen, created by the special functioning of light, the richness of the noise phonogram, rhythmic structures, etc. The lack of attention to these elements is often explained by the technological backwardness of Soviet cinema. ... [Secondary identification is associated] with an actor who possesses not only outstanding personal qualities, but also a particular sensual, erotic appeal. I understand eroticism here in its broadest sense, in the sense in which Béla Balázs used the word with quite positive overtones back in the early 1920s. I am not talking here about unbridled sex or pornography, but about the normal sensual attraction of faces and bodies, largely created on the screen with the help, for example, of special lighting, the special 'presentation' of the actor's body" (Yampolsky, 1988: 89-92).

M. Yampolsky was convinced that in the Soviet cinema of the 1980s primary identification was "extremely weakened, even though it is the foundation of cinematic enjoyment. This has to do with the fact that the world of our films possesses no hypnotic magic in relation to the viewer's consciousness. The creation of this magic is entirely within the competence of cinematic language. Another essential mechanism of spectator's pleasure can be considered "tension", the so-called "suspense", a mechanism which Soviet directors almost without exception do not master. ... Fundamental to its creation are the dialectic of the in-frame and out-of-frame space (in which the source of the threat often lurks), the mechanisms of the relationship between the camera and the character, etc." (Yampolsky, 1988: 89-90).

Finally, Yampolsky wrote, "the audience success of a film is directly linked to the mythology it reflects. The mythological layer is almost always present in mass cinematography. And this is only logical. The viewer is only fully engaged in a film when his consciousness (or rather, subconsciousness) has been touched at the level of deep psychological structures, of what is called an archetype. The stunning mass success of Lucas' or Spielberg's action films is a good confirmation of this" (Yampolsky, 1988: 92-93).

#### *Discussions*

The tradition of discussions continued in the period of Perestroika, although the clash of views became much more acute.

#### *Discussions on the status and prospects of Soviet Cinema*

In a discussion about the state and prospects of Soviet cinematography in 1989 (No..., 1989: 31-53), film critic M. Shaternikova (1934–2018) was probably the most conservative participant, partly still in the first half of the 1980s in her reflections: "Cinema has taken the road to self-development. Of course, there are costs and dangers along the way – the danger of new stamps, the danger of commercialization, the threat to the existence of national cinemas. But if all this is perceived as a danger, it is to be hoped that with good will and intelligence it will be possible to cope with them. If we do not lose sight of the higher goal – the creation of genuine socialist cinema, and not just mass culture for the most unassuming viewer, then we can think that we are at the very beginning of a unique and very exciting path. Another indisputable change is that our cinema has ceased to be "blind," mastering new material that was hitherto unthinkable. New "spaces of life" also mean a new level of artistic comprehension. Let this also have its share of costs-speculation on heretofore "forbidden" topics, excesses-but these are all diseases of growth, they will pass, and the present will remain and get stronger. One more thing: in our cinematography today we can see clearly the polarization of two trends – the cinema of "complicated" or "highbrow" type, which demands a certain level of intellectual and aesthetic development from the audience, and the cinema of mass audience, which is meant for a tired and poorly educated spectator, who demands emotional relaxation first of all. This has been and will always be the case" (Shaternikova, 1989: 48).

Film sociologist D. Dondurei (1947–2017) was more objective and realistic, emphasizing that "no one, apparently, expected that the bursting of the life-giving floodgates providing a more or less civilized state of society would undermine, in particular, its interest in Soviet feature films. It was worth introducing various kinds of relaxation: abolishing all forms of censorship, releasing dozens of works from police custody, abolishing national film committees, and so on, and the attendance of domestic films began to fall with unimaginable acceleration. From 1980, when 1,950 million tickets were sold for Soviet films, by 1988 it had fallen to 982 million" (Dondurei, 1989: 4).

A. Dubrovin (1930-1995) expressed concern about the emergence of conjunctural films like the worst of the former 'production' films, only in a new way: whether in defense of commodity-money relations, the cooperative movement, leasing contracts, etc. (Dubrovin, 1989: 34-35).

Only a year later, a new discussion about the state of Soviet cinema became much more problematic.

Film critic E. Stishova noted that “a year ago, the circle of films and phenomena of the film process was more representative. At least, it seemed that way. There was *Little Vera* as a leader of perestroika cinematography, there was a galaxy of films connected with the processes of perestroika in society and with the youth subculture that came out of the underground. *The Cold Summer of the Fifty-third* was released: it was the first sign of genre films. The auteur cinema, represented by such films as *The Black Monk*, *Mister Designer*, *The Mirror for the Hero*, *Days of Eclipse* and *The Spectator*, also gave rise to serious discussions. His documentaries were really sensational – let's at least recall *Confessions. A Chronicle of Alienation*, the first anti-cult films. Finally, movies that were taken off the "shelf" occupied an important place in the film process. The degree of social euphoria was so high that this euphoria itself created the illusion of a new structure in cinema. At any rate, there was a sense of vector, the direction of development, and some of the critics on this basis rejected the existence in our film crisis. In that conversation we used the term "crisis" as a constructive term. Like, the film process is developing normally, according to a classical scheme: decline – overcoming – development – rise, etc. Today the situation has clearly become more complicated. There is no point in arguing about whether there is a crisis or not. One might as well speak of a catastrophe... Against the background of an escalation of genre films – and we are condemned to this by the entire course of the cultural process – Soviet cinema has no alternative, if it wants to survive.

Against the background of aggressive attacks on auteur cinema as elitist and anti-people, the tangible decrease in the proportion of auteur films in the repertoire should be evaluated by us with all the objectivity available to today's film criticism. Yesterday we were an extra-economic state and lived in a non-genre cinema situation, neglecting the interests and needs of a wide audience... Today we have plunged into another extreme and are ready to make our entire cinema production exclusively entertaining, shocking and shocking. It has long been known, though, that a parallel presence of high and low genres in the film repertoire is the only advantageous economic policy in cinema” (Stishova, 1990: 29-30).

Film critic L. Karakhan dwelled more on a convincing analysis of the film/video influence of Western cinema on the Soviet audience, stressing that “the place of the film stream today is taken by the video stream – predominantly of American production. And the role of this video stream is not at all limited to the fact that it satisfies the need for vivid, impressive spectacle and entertainment. At the moment, it is the biggest importer of social stability, which is as scarce in our country as soap, powder, meat, etc. The need of the mass audience for symbols of social stability is just as great, if not greater, than for soap. In this sense, the American video stream today is almost like air for our mass audience. It should be taken into account that if the Iron Curtain finally opens completely and our counter-flow of cheap labor pours into the West, into America, the social and psychological basis for perceiving imported, borrowed stability as one's own will expand considerably” (Karakhan 1990: 33).

#### *The discussion of totalitarian cinema*

The discussion about cinema of the totalitarian era held by the *Cinema Art* journal in 1990 was no less acute.

Here film scholar K. Razlogov (1946–2021) identified four groups of films in the film repertoire of the totalitarian era: “The first group are official expressions of the dominant ideology, 'totalitarian cinema' in the proper sense of the word. Examples of this kind are *The Great Citizen* or *Triumph of the Will*. The second group consists of films that are not canonized but nevertheless contain, in their structure, the imprint of the type of artistic thinking characteristic of this or that totalitarian system. This can be seen in plot collisions and modes of conflict resolution, certain visual configurations, principles of the relationship between image and sound, and, finally, musical motifs. In principle, the list is endless and concrete variants are always individually unique... The third group consists of works which might be called "escapist" in the proper sense of the term: their authors seek "escape" from the all-powerful system into imaginary or exotic countries, into a world of "purely personal" feelings, into a more or less remote past. This escape is often illusory, because not only the dominant ideology but also the dominant poetics permeate many of these

films from within, even against the will of the authors. Adventure and musical films are striking examples here. The fourth group includes works directed against the totalitarian regime. While the first three groups can be found to a greater or lesser extent in any sociopolitical system, including the most democratic one, in its unchanged form, the last group undergoes the most tangible transformations under external pressure: totalitarianism – by definition – does not tolerate open dissent, and any protest here will inevitably be allegorical, veiled, Aesopian in nature. Hence the great artistic power of the few works that nevertheless accumulate the potential for rejection, in contrast to the faint unambiguity of "protest films" in pluralist societies" (Razlogov 1990: 115).

Film scholar and culturologist M. Turovskaya (1924–2019) believed that "the cinema of the totalitarian era was aimed at winning over the audience in favor of a particular ideology. This was done by various means-sometimes by means of trivial genres, sometimes by means of direct ideological influence. But nevertheless, the basis was always the indoctrination of this way of thinking. This does not mean at all that the image of thought was directly internalized and that the message of the film was adequate to its perception. But cinema as a whole, not just as a corpus of films, was aimed not at service, but at suggestion. From its organization (administrative apparatus, censorship, recommendation lists, the system of "state" evaluation, and so on) to the typological structure of films, it was oriented toward this function. ... a stable system of values. The totalitarian system is Manichean; it is always based on the opposition "hero – enemy"; on the hierarchy "hero – leader" (as the truth in the last instance); on the primacy of the super-valued idea over the individual" (Turovskaya, 1990: 111-112).

Film historian N. Zorkaya (1924–2006), arguing with her colleagues, stated categorically that "totalitarian cinema and its specific aesthetic existed, and even more so, exist to this day. The totalitarian film appears wherever film consciously fulfills the ideological order of the totalitarian regime, subordinating itself to the dominant clichés, myths, tastes and habits of its regime. The totalitarian film is the highest, utmost, extreme expression of engaged art – art that fulfills the state-totalitarian order" (Zorkaya, 1990: 100).

N. Zorkaya further singled out the features and signs of a totalitarian film:

- "since this art, engaged by the anti-human regime, is the expression of the "idea of enmity", it always realizes itself in the conflict, in the sharp confrontation of the two camps. One camp is "our" camp. Here is the sphere of narcissistic enthusiasm. Convinced of its ideality, the consciousness of their own superiority over the rest of the state systems, any countries, nations, societies, because we have realized complete well-being, and if it were not for the vile enemy, there would be a golden age. This enemy may be different. In Soviet cinema, it is the capitalist environment, a military adversary, a political adversary, new at each given stage. It can change from an adversary to a close friend, and vice versa, depending on the political situation. ... So: the narcissistic glorification of "its own" and the vilification of the "alien" hostile at every level of the film, from the basic plot structure to the physiognomy of the characters, to the landscape, to the lighting, these are the first two signs of a totalitarian film.

Third. This art is demagogic, false, and therefore anti-realistic in its original essence. The more poverty, the more dirt, the more poverty in society, the more pomp, varnish and beauty on the screen. ...The emblematics of affluence, of adornment in everything. Right down to the choice of nature, the weather. Only the enemy can have rain, bad weather. With us it's always dawn, always sunshine, we always have beauty. The totalitarian regime loves beauty. This is the aesthetics of the postcard, also taken to its logical limit.

Fourth. The plot, the modes of narrative, are consciously primitivized. The clear arrangement of characters, the conflicts are pushed to the limit. Excitement is always associated with the villainous actions of the enemy and the suffering of the noble hero" (Zorkaya, 1990: 101).

N. Zorkaya further uncovered the essence of the emergence of the cinematic myth of the "pest", recalling that the "pest" in the origins is a fairy tale, folkloric character. And in his remarkable work "Morphology of the Fairy Tale," V.Y. Propp reveals the essence of this fairy tale character, his functions, and his role in dramaturgy. But it is one thing to have a fairy tale. It is another thing when this myth of the pest becomes the basis of state policy and art, which leads to monstrous consequences" (Zorkaya, 1990: 102).

N. Zorkaya disagreed that there were only two hypostases of the enemy: the racial enemy (in Nazism) and the class enemy (in Stalinism), insisting that the circle of "pests" and "enemies" was much wider: "the factory worker, the undercut bourgeois, the monarchist, then the fist who stashed away the bread, the whiteguard who came from his Paris to rob us. Then it's the son of the



White Guard who planted the bomb. Then it's a saboteur, it's a foreign "special agent" invited to build a factory, it's a spy, of course. And then, in later times, it is a dissident, a dissident, an intellectual. This is how the folklore structure is transformed and through the *lubok*, the "mass culture" comes to the totalitarian cinema" (Zorkaya, 1990: 102).

*On the problems of film criticism and film studies*

During the Perestroika period, articles about the problems of film criticism and film studies were, in contrast to the stagnation period, quite rare guests on the pages of the *Cinema Art* journal.

Nonetheless, L. Donets (1935–2016), a film critic, wrote with regret (and with good reason) that "a clan of young critics appeared in the second half of the 1980s that developed a certain lumpen style. They are rude, that's all. 'He who was nothing will become everything'. ... But even serious critics sometimes appear in order to show themselves off, and abandon the need to look at the people. It is clear that without subjectivity, there is simply no criticism. ... It makes me want to cry. The critic sets his own problems and says that the director does not solve them" (Donets, 1990: 47, 49).

Film scholar M. Zak (1929–2011) was convinced that in the USSR in the late 1980s, "film journalism was simply developing remarkably well. And not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively. Publicism is beautiful on the screen. But when we begin to deal with it in film studies, it seems to me that this is a bad thing. Film studies is a completely different field. Publicism in film studies tends to turn into a declaration, preventing a truly scientific reconstruction of the history of film as part of film history. Of course, it is easier to declare than to do exhausting research" (Zak, 1989: 36).

In this regard, film scholar E. Levin (1935–1991) welcomed the appearance of a new theoretical journal, *Film Studies Notes*, in which "sociocultural analysis is combined with artistic analysis... Both society, and culture, and art, and the artistic form, and the inner biography of the filmmaker are seen by researchers as a process that cannot be described only in ontological, or only in political-ideological, or only in mythological, or only in axiological, or only in art history, or only in psychological categories. In many respects new methodological principles of historical-typological and structural-genetic study of the object as a complex dynamic system, the contradictions within which are not discarded or simplified, but are understood exactly as contradictions, explained within the system and as its property, so the authors' concepts reproduce in a consistent theoretical form multidimensionality and multivalence of the object, its typology, structure, genesis" (Levin, 1991: 109).

*On documentary and popular science films*

In contrast to previous decades, during the perestroika era, the *Cinema Art* journal wrote infrequently about documentary, scholarly, and popular-scientific cinema.

Practically the only theoretical article on this subject was an article by the screenwriter and film critic A. Zagdansky (1919–1997) (Zagdansky, 1990: 96-100).

At the beginning of his article A. Zagdansky stated that "the outcome of the main battle has already been predetermined – the Marxist-Leninist worldview (together with the consequent "only true doctrine," under the hard radiation of which we all grew up) ... goes into the irrecoverable past, taking with it not only millions of human lives, but also our once so sweet feeling that we live in the 'best-best' country" (Zagdansky 1990: 96).

And then the article expressed serious concern about the future of documentary and scientific cinema in the USSR: "The energy that provided the breakthrough of non-fiction cinema in these recent years is the energy of hatred. Hatred of the inhuman, Kafkaesque system in which some, suffocating with suffocation, have lived their entire creative lives while others have only just begun to take their first steps. ... This energetic release of aggression on its own will is comparable to the energetic outburst of a revolution. Until yesterday, this energy resonated with the viewer. Today... today he is already tired, and most importantly, everything he could - understood! The scene of farewell dragged on. What now? ... I don't think there will be any happy times for non-fiction cinema. We are all in a painful situation of self-determination, and probably few will find a solution. In the scientific cinema even more so. ... We are doomed to play such an unenviable role in the future if we do not solve the two problems facing us: one is television distribution, the other is programmatic thinking" (Zagdansky, 1990: 97-99).

*The Video phenomenon*

Instead of the usual earlier articles about television, the *Cinema Art* turned to the topic of the then novelty, video.

Film scholar S. Muratov (1931–2015) wrote that “videotape erases the line between broadcast and television film, and tomorrow it will erase the line between on-screen work and published periodicals. Some countries are already issuing magazines with programs-discs for owners of personal computers... It is not difficult to imagine by analogy a videocassette magazine for music lovers or, say, for those who wish to specialize in an academic course in some narrow field of knowledge. The increasing redistribution of our time in favor of audiovisual media cannot but affect the reader-literature relationship as well” (Muratov, 1987: 109).

#### *Theoretical articles on foreign cinema*

For understandable ideological reasons, the publications on foreign cinema in the perestroika-era USSR were the most inertial in their approach.

That is why the article by the film critic V. Matizen (Matizen 1989: 101-106), which reviewed the collection *Myths and Reality*, Issue 10, published in 1988 (Myths..., 1988), whose authors were film critics and film scholars V. Baskakov, G. Bohemsky, E. Kartseva, L. Mamatova, L. Melville, A. Plakhov, K. Razlogov, N. Savitsky, etc.

V. Matizen reasonably reminded that “Western cinema has always been a special zone of Soviet film studies, where its own rules were in force, no less strict than the rules of conduct of a Soviet man abroad. At this 'leading edge of the ideological struggle' there has always been a kind of martial law in which, as you know, a certain amount of disinformation is also allowed” (Matizen, 1989: 101).

V. Matizen emphasized that here the main rule of presentation was the following: “everything bad comes from the bourgeois system, everything good comes in spite of it. The implication of insolubility: their problems cannot be solved under their system. The implication of darkness and limitation: whoever does not accept the previous thesis is a representative of evil forces or a bourgeois, limited subject (and, in cinema, a myth-maker). Naturally, armed with a theory as advanced as it was scientific, Russian foreign film scholars could not help but feel a profound sense of superiority over Western filmmakers, who had no such scientific basis, but were at best "subjective beliefs" which, voluntarily or involuntarily, reflected the "point of view of the bourgeoisie". Gradually, a pattern emerged by which the article was constructed” (Matizen, 1989: 102).

In the late 1980s, the situation in *Cinema Art* began to change, “the number of materials about foreign cinema increased sharply in the journal, and they began to be evaluated on their own merits. The widespread condemnation of everything Western was gone. And this may well be called one of the most crucial progresses that the perestroika program led to” (Dmitrieva, 2020).

Thus, “the publications on Western cinematography in the pages of the *Cinema Art* during the Perestroika period admitted that the earlier "class" principles of evaluating feature films and the policy of purchasing and distributing foreign films were deeply flawed. The commercially oriented foreign cinema presented an example to be emulated: the journal recommended that Russian filmmakers adopt the technical and financial techniques of its production, and that the audience should consider its characters as moral ideals. Postmodernism, wrapped in the bright wrapper of American mass culture, was asserted as a replacement for outdated socialist realism and immediate ‘blackness’” (Shishkin, 2018: 48).

An example of new theoretical trends in relation to foreign cinema is, for example, the article by film historian O. Reisen "We are like spies. The Image of the KGB Agent in Foreign Cinema" (Reisen, 1990: 123-129).

A new approach to the cinema of the "countries of socialist democracy" is contained in film critic S. Lavrentiev's article (Lavrentyev 1988: 143-152), which argues that “Eastern European socialist cinema acquired its true integrity precisely when national cinemas were given the opportunity to shed their dogmatic constraints and finally become different” (Lavrentiev 1988: 143).

## 5. Conclusion

Our analysis of film studies concepts (in the context of the sociocultural and political situation, etc.) of the existence of the *Cinema Art* journal during the period of "perestroika" (1986-1991) showed that theoretical works on cinematic subjects during this period can be divided into the following types:

- scientific-publicistic articles written under the influence of perestroika trends of change in Soviet society, including the sphere of cinema (V. Fomin, E. Gromov, S. Dobrotvorsky, S. Lavrentiev, etc.).

- theoretical articles and discussions dedicated primarily to professional issues: analysis of the theoretical heritage of the classics of Soviet cinema, directing, the problem of "Cinema and the Spectator," etc. (Y. Bogomolov, E. Levin, I. Levshina, N. Klimontovich, L. Mamatova, M. Turovskaya, M. Yampolsky, M. Zak, etc.);

- theoretical articles on foreign cinematography (S. Lavrentiev, V. Matizen, O. Reisen, and others).

Overall, between 1986 and 1991 the *Cinema Art* journal significantly shifted away from the former ideological stereotypes of Soviet film studies, and took a radical re-examination of the history of Soviet and world cinema, as well as an objective evaluation of contemporary film production.

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**Appendix.** Key dates and events relevant to the historical, political, economic, ideological, sociocultural, and cinematic context in which the *Cinema Art* journal was published in 1986–1991.

### 1986

- February 25 – March 6, 1986: the XXVII Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.
- April 21–28: All-Union Film Festival (Alma-Ata).
- April: the accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.
- May 13–15, 1986: Fifth USSR Congress of Cinematographers.
- June 24–28: The Eighth Congress of Soviet Writers.
- June: M. Gorbachev announces the beginning of "perestroika".
- June: the threefold drop in world oil prices (from \$ 29 per barrel in the previous year to \$10), which sharply increased the economic crisis in the USSR.
- July 7–10: French President François Mitterrand visits the USSR.
- October 11–12: M. Gorbachev and R. Reagan meet in Reykjavik.
- November 4: opening of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in Vienna.
- November 19: The law "On Individual Labor Activity" is adopted in the USSR.
- December: return of Academician Sakharov from exile to Moscow.

**1987**

January 13: The USSR Council of Ministers passes a Resolution "On the Order of Establishing and Operating Joint Ventures with the Participation of Soviet Organizations and Firms from Capitalist and Developing Countries".

January 27–28: The "perestroika" Plenum of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, which resolved to develop cooperatives and alternative elections.

February 5: the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On the creation of cooperatives for the production of consumer goods".

March 28 – April 1: British Prime Minister M. Thatcher's visit to the USSR.

May 1: The "Law on Individual Labor Activity" came into force in the USSR.

May: All-Union Film Festival (Tbilisi).

May 23: The USSR cancels the jamming of most Western radio stations on its territory.

May 28: An 18-year-old amateur pilot M. Rust flies an illegal flight from Hamburg (via Helsinki) to Moscow (he lands on Red Square).

July 6–17: Moscow International Film Festival. Gold prize: *The Interview* (Italy, directed by F. Fellini).

October 22: J. Brodsky is awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

November 7: The USSR solemnly celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Soviet power.

December 1–10: M. Gorbachev's visit to Washington. The signing of the treaty on the elimination of intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

M. Gorbachev is declared Man of the Year in the West.

World oil prices in general remain low, which leads to a further decline in the USSR economy and the standard of living of its population.

**1988**

March 8: The Ovechkin family makes an unsuccessful attempt to seize and hijack a passenger plane from the USSR to the West.

March 13: the newspaper *Soviet Russia* publishes a letter by N. Andreeva "I cannot compromise my principles", in which she actually spoke out against "perestroika".

May 15: the beginning of withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

All-Union Film Festival (Baku).

May 29 – June 2: M. Gorbachev and R. Reagan meet in Moscow.

May: B. Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago* is published in the USSR for the first time.

October 24–27: a visit to the USSR by Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Kohl.

November 25–26: French President François Mitterrand visits the USSR.

November 30: the USSR cancels the jamming of *Radio Free Europe* on its territory.

December 6–8: M. Gorbachev's visit to New York (UN). His statement about the reduction of Soviet armed forces and the beginning of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe.

World oil prices in general remain low, leading to a further decline in the USSR economy and the standard of living of its population, the desire of its most active part to emigrate to the West, now permitted.

**1989**

January 20: J. Bush Sr. becomes president of the United States.

February 15: Completion of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

March 26: the first in the history of the USSR alternative elections of delegates to the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR.

April 9: Soviet troops in Tbilisi use force to disperse a rally, at which people demanded independence of Georgia.

April 18: The Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR proclaims the state sovereignty of the republic.

May 23: Decree on the restoration of Soviet citizenship for director Y. Lyubimov.

May 25 – June 9: I Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. M. Gorbachev is elected President of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

June 4: In Beijing dispersed a student demonstration in Tiananmen Square.



June 4: In parliamentary elections in Poland *Solidarity* won.

July 7-18: Moscow International Film Festival. Golden George: *The Soap Thieves* (Italy, directed by M. Nichetti).

July 28: The Supreme Soviet of the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic proclaimed the state sovereignty of this republic.

July: *New World/Novyi Mir* magazine publishes A. Solzhenitsyn's book "Gulag Archipelago" for the first time in the USSR.

November 9: The beginning of destroying the Berlin Wall.

November 10: The overthrow of T. Zhivkov in Bulgaria.

November 24: Victory of the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia.

November 26: Victory of the anticommunist opposition in the Hungarian elections.

December 12-24: II Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR. The congress condemned the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (1939), as well as Soviet troops in Afghanistan and the use of military force in Tbilisi on 9.04.1989.

December 14: death of Academician A. Sakharov.

December: the victory of anti-communist forces in Romania.

Numerous meetings of M. Gorbachev with Western leaders (including US President Bush) and his statements about further disarmament.

Mass unrest in a number of Union republics.

World oil prices generally remain low, leading to a further decline in the USSR economy and the standard of living of its population.

### 1990

January 30: The USSR agrees to the unification of Germany.

February 27-28: The founding congress of the Union of Cinematographers of Russia.

March 25: In order to stop Lithuania's secession from the USSR, the Soviets send troops to Vilnius.

May 29: B. Yeltsin is elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic.

June 12: The Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic is adopted. The priority of the Russian laws over the all-Union legislation was introduced.

July 2-13, 1990: The last XXVIII Congress of the Soviet communist Party. During the Congress B. Yeltsin demonstratively announces his withdrawal from the Soviet communist Party.

July 14-16: The USSR gives its consent for a united Germany to join NATO.

September 12: The signing of the treaty to unite Germany.

September 18: The newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* published an article by A. Solzhenitsyn, "How Should We Improve Russia?".

M. Gorbachev's numerous meetings with Western leaders.

M. Gorbachev is awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mass unrest in a number of republics.

Union republics one by one declared their sovereignty.

World oil prices in general remain low, which leads to a further decline in the economy of the USSR and the living standards of its population.

Resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers "On the Restructuring of Creative, Organizational and Economic Activities in the Soviet Cinematography".

### 1991

January 16-19: the war in Kuwait between the U.S. and Iraq.

May 20: The Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted the Law "On the order of exit from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and entry into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of the USSR citizens", which allowed the free departure of the USSR citizens abroad.

June 12: B. Yeltsin is elected President of the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic. A. Rutskoy is elected vice president.

July 1: Liquidation of the military bloc of the Warsaw Pact countries.

July, 8-19: Moscow International Film Festival. Golden George: *The Ferry Dog, Running by the Sea* (USSR-Germany, directed by K. Gevorkian).

August 19-22: failed coup attempt in the USSR.

August 24: M. Gorbachev resigned as General Secretary of the Soviet communist Party Central Committee and called on the Soviet communist Party Central Committee to announce the self-dissolution of the party.

Mass riots in a number of Soviet republics. A number of republics of the USSR declared their independence.

December 8: The actual dissolution of the USSR as a result of the "Belovezh Agreements" between the Republic of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine as the founder states of the USSR, the signatories of the Treaty of the USSR (1922).

December 25: voluntary resignation of M. Gorbachev as President of the USSR, the transition of power to B. Yeltsin.

December 26: the official dissolution of the USSR.

World oil prices remain low, which leads to a further decline in the USSR economy and the living standards of its population.