Stalin's Documentary Filmmaking Industry, 1926-1946: Development, Operation, and Practices

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

My dissertation describes and analyzes the Soviet Unions' documentary filmmaking efforts between 1926 and 1946, from the rise of Joseph Stalin as leader of the Soviet Union until the end of the Second World War. Focusing on how Stalinist documentary developed and operated, I trace the individuals, groups, circumstances, institutions, and practices that shaped and defined the industry.

Chapter One describes how a small group of Soviet film experts with experience in documentary seized on changing domestic and international circumstances between 1926 and 1934 to restructure, expand, and professionalize documentary and newsreel efforts in the Soviet Union. Their efforts resulted in the elevation and professionalization of documentary film education at the country's leading national film school and an expansion in the number of students studying documentary filmmaking.

Chapter Two discusses the interdependent relationship that developed between Soviet leaders and film administrators on the one hand, and the expanding number of young professionally trained cameramen and filmmakers on the other between 1934 and 1941. The Party administered and cultivated a professional class of cameramen and filmmakers with "carrots and sticks" in the form of a privileged education and access to information and resources, high salaries, excellent employment opportunities, publicity, an emphasis on the heroism and historic nature of their line of work, but also fear of severe punishment for digressions. Soviet cameramen and filmmakers reciprocated with initiative and unorthodox practices and providing feedback to the regime, to try to ensure the production of footage and to propel their careers.

Chapter Three outlines Soviet leaders' strong interest and involvement in the documentary film genre by the mid-1930s. The chapter also describes the impressive achievements of Stalin's

documentary filmmaking industry between 1934 and 1941 in terms of production and reach but also the industry's drawbacks and limitations.

Chapter Four analyzes how the production of combat footage was reliant on unofficial practices and coping mechanisms that Soviet frontline cameramen adopted and proposed, such as filming reenacted combat and forging relationships with local military personnel, that were critical to ensuring their livelihood on the frontline and the successful production of hundreds of thousands of meters of combat footage for the Soviet government. I investigate why cameramen adopted these practices and why film administrators and Party leaders over time not only learned to tolerate cameramen's practices but also changed their administrative methods to better fit cameramen's needs.

Chapter Five investigates how, why, when, and for what purposes Soviet leaders and film administrators instructed cameramen to not only produce war footage but also to shoot immense amounts of non-combat footage of a dramatic and diverse nature to be included in full-length documentaries and to be placed in the country's vast documentary film archive. The footage and the full-length documentaries based on the non-combat film material became the largest and most important component of the Soviet Union's war-time footage.

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I have presented parts of my dissertation at conferences, where colleagues and peers provided helpful comments and criticism, all of which strengthened my arguments and resulted in the final product. Through it all my personal friendships have been critical to my being able to get through the research and writing process. My personal and long-time friends Paulin Regnard, Terry Mintner, Noah Yasskin, Matthew Cosby, Stanley Boskoff, Jason Secor, and Jesse Lovell, have all been unflaggingly understanding and patient as I have navigated the difficult terrain of research and writing, and willing to hear me out when I needed to vent my frustrations. Finally, my family has been a deep well of support and I will always be thankful to them. I have been blessed with an extended family that has always been supportive and expressed great interest both in my project and the value of my graduate education. My parents August and Ernest Raiklin, were a constant bedrock who believed in me and supported me every step of the way. Finally, I want to thank and express my love for my wife Iuliia, who has stood by me through thick and thin.

Introduction

My interest in Stalinist documentary filmmaking efforts began as I was completing my Masters thesis. My research focused on the debates and discussions of Soviet feature filmmakers on the Artistic Council at Mosfilm from 1939–41.[1] I learned that Stalinist feature filmmaking efforts suffered from a number of problems on the eve of World War II: a sharp drop in the 'artistic quality' of films; a decline in the variety of film genres and themes; unfulfilled film production targets; a lack of good film scripts; an increasing number of 'dull' films; a difficulty in attracting actors; a lack of equipment and infrastructure; a failure in reaching the masses; and difficulties with providing film students with adequate work. My investigation demonstrated and explained why, even in the wake of fear and terror, filmmakers offered a diversity of opinions, proposals, works, and positions in a vain attempt to resolve the setbacks and challenges facing Soviet feature filmmaking.

During my research I became immersed in the scholarship on Soviet cinema during the Stalin era. I realized scholarship mainly focused on Stalinist feature filmmaking. Whether studying the history of Soviet Russia, or Soviet cinema during the time of Joseph Stalin, scholars either considered feature filmmaking to be a more important medium for Stalin or simply much more interesting to study than Soviet newsreels and documentaries.[2] The small body of writing focused on Soviet documentary and newsreel efforts informed us that in the 1930s, Soviet documentary and newsreel became a didactic and formulaic phenomenon, a kind of wasteland in which the state

[1] Benjamin Raiklin, "Soviet Cinema in the Wake of the Terror: The Artistic Council at Mosfilm, 1939–1941," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 3, no. 3 (2009): 267–88.

[2] See for example Denise Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era, 1918–1935* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985). The most recent excellent treatments of Soviet cinema development under Stalin continue to focus on feature filmmaking. See for instance, Jamie Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion under Stalin* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010); Maria Belodubrovskaya's doctoral dissertation, "Politically Incorrect: Filmmaking under Stalin and the Failure of Power" (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2011); and Maria Belodubrovskaia., *Not According to Plan: Filmmaking under Stalin* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2017).

stifled innovation, experimentation was curtailed, and Soviet documentary as it had operated in the 1920s had died.

While reading the secondary scholarship on Stalinist cinema during the Great Patriotic War (the war the Soviets fought against the Nazis on the Eastern Front on Soviet territory) from 1941–45, I learned of the achievements made by the Soviet Union with documentary and newsreel during the Second World War.[3] I was interested in learning how the Soviet Union was able to achieve so much with documentary when the country faced a formidable foe and when resources, institutions, and personnel were so strained.

I encountered the work of Peter Kenez, who, in *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin*, mentioned that what had been achieved by the Soviet Union with documentary and newsreel was impressive: "By World War II, the Soviet film industry possessed an impressive tradition of making documentaries, and artists of considerable experience."[4] I was intrigued by Kenez's statement and wanted to know more about the Soviet Union's "impressive tradition of making documentaries" of the 1930s and who the "artists of considerable experience" (besides Dziga Vertov) were. A subsequent question arose. If what Kenez alluded to were true, how was it that the Soviet Union achieved impressive results, when only ten years prior, the Soviet Union operated a small make-shift documentary filmmaking operation?

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[3] See Graham Roberts, *Forward Soviet! History and Non-Fiction Film in the USSR* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999); D. W. Spring, "Soviet Newsreel and the Great Patriotic War," in *Propaganda, Politics, and Film, 1918–1945*, ed. Nicholas Pronay and D. W. Spring (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1982), 270-292; Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda: Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998); and Peter Kenez, "Black and White: The War on Film," in *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia*, ed. Richard Stites, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 157-175. See also Jeremy Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust: Soviet Cinema and the Genocide of the Jews, 1938–1946* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012).

[4] Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001), 169.

These were the questions that drove my research when I stepped into the Russian and Ukrainian archives. During my time in the archives, I discovered two recently-published primary source collections (based mainly on archival collections) on Soviet war-time documentary filmmaking efforts, *Kino na voine*[5] and *Tsena kadra*,[6] that, together with my own archival research, became the foundation for my investigation into the personnel, resources, institutions, and relationships behind the Soviet Union's documentary film production efforts during the Great Patriotic War (Chapters Four and Five of the dissertation).

As I continued to work in the archives and read Soviet newspapers and journals from the time, as well as the memoirs and diaries left by Soviet documentary film cameramen, I began to uncover the outlines of an expansive documentary filmmaking industry that operated in the Soviet Union before the Second World War. It was at this point that my research trip ended and I left the archives to begin writing chapters covering the internal operations and administrative structure of Soviet documentary and newsreel efforts during the Great Patriotic War. Yet, I still was interested in exploring the individuals, groups, practices, circumstances, and institutions that helped build and sustain the Soviet Union's documentary filmmaking industry during the 1930s.

I discovered a newly-published, three volume primary source collection of the history of VGIK entitled *K istorii VGIKa*.[7] The first volume of the three revealed the critical role older film experts from the 1920s played in pushing for a greater role to be played by documentary in the Soviet Union and shaping the professionalization and expansion of documentary film education in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. The primary source collection, along with articles in Soviet

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[5] Valerii Fomin, *Kino na voine: Dokumenty i fakty* (Moscow: Materik, 2005).
[6] Valerii Fomin, *Tsena kadra: Kazhdyi vtoroi ranen, kazhdyi chetvertyi ubit* (Moscow: Kanon+, 2010).
[7] Venedikt Vinogradov and K. Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934): Dokumenty. Pressa. Vospominaniia. Issledovaniia* (Moscow: VGIK, 2000); id., *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' II (1935–1945): Dokumenty. Pressa. Vospominaniia. Issledovaniia* (Moscow: VGIK, 2004); and id., *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' III (1945–1955): Dokumenty. Pressa. Vospominaniia. Issledovaniia* (Moscow: VGIK, 2006).

magazines and journals from the time, and the memoirs written by film experts came to constitute the basis of my narrative.

Relying on articles in Soviet newspapers and journals from the time and the published and unpublished memoirs and diary entries written by Soviet cameramen during the 1930s, I was able to identify the practices and relationships between documentary cameramen, Soviet leaders, and film administrators in the 1930s that served as a foundation for Stalin's documentary filmmaking efforts. A primary source collection, entitled *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino*[8] that focused on Soviet cinema development greatly assisted me in recognizing the parallels and connections that existed between documentary filmmaking developments in the Soviet Union under Stalin and the world. Finally, I discovered the primary source collection *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*,[9] which contained archival documents describing the direct involvement and interest of Party leaders and film administrators in Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts in the 1930s.

I devote my first chapter to explaining how, why, and when the Soviet Union reconfigured, expanded, and professionalized documentary film education. The process took eight years to complete, between 1926 and 1934. I describe and analyze how the Party leadership's call for recasting Soviet cinema into a weapon of state propaganda capable of reaching millions at home and abroad, together with Stalin's plan for a Great Break, the rise of Nazi Germany, the severe economic downturn in the United States and Europe, rising tensions and conflicts in the world in the early 1930s provided the circumstances for a small group of Soviet film experts to push for the idea that documentary play a more important role in Soviet propaganda efforts.

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[8] Valerii Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929* (Moscow: Materik, 2004); Aleksandr Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945* (Moscow: Materik, 2007); and Valerii Vomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1946–1965* (Moscow: Kanon+, 2010).

[9] G. Bondareva, ed., *Kremlevskii kinoteatr 1928–1953 dokumenty* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2005).

They saw their medium as the best way for the Bolsheviks to create an official record of the present, the past, and the future. They cast their battle as one against feature filmmaking and more independent minded filmmakers. Pushing for elevating documentary's importance in the Soviet Union was also a way also for film experts to propel their own careers and limit the careers of colleagues who disagreed with their vision. By 1934 they had elevated documentary's importance in the eyes of Party leaders and film administrators and they had developed and expanded the country's educational programs to professionally train a new generation of young documentary film cameramen and filmmakers.

In my second chapter I outline and analyze the interdependent relationship that developed between Soviet leaders and film administrators on the one hand and its new generation of professionally trained cameramen and filmmakers on the other between 1934 and 1941. The Soviet regime employed both "carrots," in the form of high salaries, exciting careers, privilege, and publicity, and "sticks," in the form of fear and terror, to cultivate and administer its new generation of professionally-trained documentary cameramen and filmmakers. The young film cadres reciprocated by proposing ingenious methods, ideas, and practices to further the Stalinist documentary filmmaking project, for example, going against official orders and finding employment with the country's expanding network documentary filmmaking studios, fixing used cameras right in the field rather than sending them to repair shops, taking great risks in trying to film exciting footage for the regime, and voicing their concerns about Soviet film technology.

In my third chapter, I discuss the achievements, importance, and constraints of Stalin's documentary filmmaking industry between 1934 and 1941, focusing on production, output, and reach. By 1934, the country operated an expansive government run network of filmmaking studios focused on producing documentary films, newsreels, and footage. The number and types of

newsreels and full-length documentaries produced expanded and the industry's reach had increased greatly at home and abroad. Centrally administered, the country's documentary filmmaking industry was answerable directly to leading Party figures and government institutions. In fact, Soviet leaders, including Stalin himself, attributed such great importance to the genre by the mid-1930s that they were directly involved in its affairs. I also discuss the pressures that limited its scope: over-centralization, bureaucracy, censorship, poor technology and infrastructure, censorship, and so on.

My final two chapters focus on the production of Soviet documentary footage and films during the Great Patriotic War. With the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, the Soviet system's inefficient and bureaucratic nature, the often-unrealistic instructions of central authorities (whether Party leaders, film editors, studio heads, or film administrators), new and competing institutions, the country's poor filmmaking technology, and brutal war-time conditions on the Eastern Front conspired to make it even more difficult for official arrangements to function properly and to achieve their intended results. Rather, personal initiative, relationships, and coping mechanisms emanating from below, from cameramen, were critical to keeping the Soviet Union's film propaganda efforts going. In fact, I argue had official Soviet methods of producing war-time footage been followed, the Soviet Union's propaganda efforts with documentary more than likely would have been derailed.

At first, Soviet leaders and film administrators did not see eye to eye with cameramen about how best to produce war-time combat footage or how cameramen should behave, live, and work on the frontline. Party leaders and film administrators repeatedly provided cameramen with official instructions and made clear that the unorthodox practices adopted by cameramen were unacceptable. Yet, what was most important for the Party and film administrators in the end was

that the production of war-time footage continue unabated, irrespective of whether instructions and orders were strictly followed or not. Instead, the Party and film administrators in Moscow came to tolerate, accept, and even support many of the unofficial methods and practices employed on the ground by cameramen, and adjusted their administrative techniques to better reflect the needs of cameramen.

Finally, I discuss the Soviet leadership's and film administrators' interest in producing wide-ranging war-time film material distinct from combat footage. Part of the reason for the interest stemmed from the experiences of the late 1920s and 1930s, when film experts such as Shub had demonstrated the power of having copious amounts of dramatic and varied footage on hand stored in properly organized film archives that the regime could turn to both in the present and for future generations. Indeed, by the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union was amassing thousands of meters of extra film material to be archived or included in full-length documentaries. During the war, the positive feedback of film critics at home and abroad also informed the Party leadership and film administrators to instruct cameramen to produce ever more rich and distinct film material distinct from combat footage. Finally, cameramen, for their part, were more than willing to oblige, as dramatic and diverse non-combat footage was much easier and less risky to produce than genuine combat footage.

Chapter One: The Push to Reconfigure, Expand, and Professionalize Soviet Documentary, 1926–34

Introduction

The threat of a world war loomed increasingly on the horizon for Soviet leaders in the late 1920s and a world depression set in in 1929. At home, Joseph Stalin set out to reshape Soviet society with a radical reconfiguration of the country away from the New Economic Policy of the 1920s toward a "socialist reconstruction" of society. The Soviet leadership also called for a "socialist reconstruction" of the country's filmmaking efforts away from one with a small number of directors producing films at semi-private studios to a state-run operation that could mass produce films reaching wide audiences at home and abroad.

Soviet leaders appointed a Party loyalist, Boris Shumiatskii, who had no experience in cinema, as the country's chief film administrator in 1930 to help with reconfiguring, expanding, and professionalizing Soviet cinema. Shumiatskii relied on Party instructions as well as a small cohort of film experts to assist him. My chapter focuses on such key figures as Esfir' Shub, Nikolai Lebedev, Grigorii Boltianskii, and a few others.

In the 1920s, they had set out to prove how they and their craft could be useful to the regime. Now, seizing on the changing domestic and international climate, they pushed for the expansion, centralization, professionalization, and nationalization of Soviet documentary before the Party and Shumiatskii. They even argued that documentary should be the preferred cinematic form rather than feature. Wrapping their arguments in Soviet ideology, they pointed out that their genre like Soviet journalism, was a more serious and a more truthful representation of reality, as opposed to feature, which was based on made-up stories and more closely aligned with a capitalist and bourgeois vision of cinema. Soviet non-fiction film was a historical document they also

stressed. From a practical standpoint, documentaries and newsreels, they argued, could be produced faster and they cost less.

Meanwhile, on the international stage, in 1933 the National Socialists came to power in Germany with their aggressive rhetoric and propaganda against Communism and the Soviet Union. Now, as part of their push for documentary, leading film experts devoted to documentary set out to professionalize documentary film education in the country, increase the number of cameramen and filmmakers working in Soviet documentary, expand its importance as a separate field from feature film education, and organize a national documentary filmmaking conference separate from feature where like-minded individuals interested in Soviet documentary's potential and development could meet routinely.

My findings in the chapter demonstrate that "socialist reconstruction" of Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts, was not simply driven by a top-down process in which Joseph Stalin or the Soviet leadership provided the ideas and answers and where experts blindly followed the Party line. Instead, Soviet leaders delegated responsibility for sorting out details to film experts and administrators. Film experts (and administrators) interpreted the Party's grand vision for cinema and how best to achieve the Party's overall aims, they filled in the blanks as it often became necessary and provided concrete ideas and solutions.[1]

[1] My findings concur with recent scholarship by Francine Hirsch, Stephen Kotkin, and Peter Konecny, among others, who go beyond the "totalitarian" and "revisionist" models of Stalinism to show that the making of the Soviet Union under Stalin relied not only on instructions from above but input from below from experts—that it was "an interactive" and "participatory process." See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 5; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 279; and Peter Konecny, *Builders and Deserters: Students, State, and Community in Leningrad, 1917–1941* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999). For older "totalitarian" treatments of Soviet filmmaking, see A.I. Rubailo, *Partiinoe rukovodstvo razvitiem kinoiskusstva (1928–1937 gg.)* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1976), and Richard Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema, 1917–1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). For a newer treatment that has begun to recognize the instrumentality of film experts to the development of Stalinist cinema, see Graham Roberts, "Esfir Shub: A suitable case for treatment," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 11, no. 2 (1991): 149-159.

Lenin's Grand Vision for Soviet Documentary Deferred

The first leader of the Soviet state, Vladimir Lenin expressed an interest in the potential power of newsreel and documentary. Just months, if not weeks, after the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917, Lenin made statements to the effect that documentary cinema was the most ideal form of propaganda to help popularize and bring knowledge (*prosveshchenie*) to the masses. Anatolii Lunacharskii, the Minister of Enlightenment throughout the 1920s, recalled a conversation he had had with Lenin in which the country's leader attributed the highest significance to documentary cinema and to the newsreel as a form of propaganda and enlightenment: "The production of new films, permeated with communist ideas reflecting Soviet reality, must begin with the newsreel."[2]

Lenin saw in documentary the potential for a direct reflection of the new reality he and the Bolsheviks were trying to inaugurate. He viewed documentary as a kind of revolutionary journalism and called it as such: "film journalism" (*kinopublitsistika*). We also learn that Lenin himself saw in the newsreel a type of "visual journalism" (*obraznaia publitsistika*) based on the example of the best Soviet newspapers being published.[3] Soviet newsreel cameramen would be "Bolshevik journalists with cameras" (*bol'shevistskie zhurnalisty s kinoapparatami*).[4] What he meant by this was that newsreels and documentaries aimed to come as close as possible to newspapers in their immediacy, content, and overall nature.[5]

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[2] Nikolai Lebedev, *Partiia o kino: Sbornik materialov pod redaktsiei i s kommentariami N. A. Lebedeva* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1939), 31–32.
[3] Ibid., 33.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Originally from Anatolii Lunacharskii, *Kino na zapade i u nas* (Moscow: Teakinopechat', 1928), as reprinted in Lebedev, *Partiia o kino*, 33.

In documentary, Lenin saw a new form of communication that fit communist ideology better than feature. To him, feature was a world of make believe concocted by private companies in the West to protect the capitalist system by duping the working classes and the masses with mindless entertainment so that they would not rise up against the capitalist system. Lenin attacked feature as being too flashy and entertaining, coming at the expense of serious content and information. As Lenin himself stated, "if you have good newsreels, that are serious and enlightening pictures, then it is not important what kind of useless film of the ordinary type is shown in order to attract audiences."[6]

He viewed documentary as so important that he became personally involved in its operations during the first large scale crisis he encountered following the Revolution: the Civil War (1918–21), which he was intent on recording on film. Even as he and his colleagues fought a war of survival, strapped for resources, personnel, and technology, he relied on documentary cameramen and filmmakers utilizing foreign film equipment (as Russia did not have its own film technology or equipment at the time) and trained before the Revolution to film the Civil War. Lenin himself provided guidance and instructions to the cameramen going out to the front during the Civil War. According to Lev Kuleshov, who himself worked as a documentary film cameraman during the Civil War, he and other cameramen and filmmakers routinely received instructions directly from Lenin when they would return to Moscow from the front for their next assignment.[7]

Yet, documentary, and cinema in general operating was just in its infancy in the Russian Empire when the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, and it did not help that a state of civil war followed. Lenin was working with only a handful of cameramen and filmmakers capable and willing to film the Civil War for the Bolsheviks. With the end of the Civil War in 1921, politically,

[6] Lebedev, *Partiia o kino*, 32.
[7] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 312.

the Bolshevik leadership entered into a difficult period starting in 1922, when Lenin suffered a stroke that incapacitated him until his death in 1924. Soviet leaders were now in search of a new leader amongst a diverse group who did not see eye to eye: Leon Trotsky, Nikolai Bukharin, Grigorii Zinoviev, Lev Kamenev, and Joseph Stalin.

In the meantime, the Soviet Union operated under the New Economic Policy (NEP), which Lenin had introduced in 1921. Seen by Lenin as a temporary remedy to the economic crises caused by the Civil War that resulted in famine and economic disarray, the Bolsheviks allowed private enterprise to develop once again in the country. In cinema, the Bolsheviks adopted a more hands-off approach than during the Civil War. This meant that Soviet filmmaking efforts under the newly reorganized state film trust *Sovkino* (created in 1924 to replace *Goskino*) though nominally under the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment (*Narkompros*) operated as a semi-private trust and industry.[8]

A loose administrative and institutional governing system governed NEP cinema. Leading filmmakers in both feature (Sergei Eisenstein) and documentary (Dziga Vertov) voluntarily became members of the state sponsored Association of Revolutionary Cinematography (ARK) founded in 1924. Its goal was to coordinate amongst the country's handful of small studios and film workers to create a Soviet cinema that would be revolutionary in its ideology and satisfying Party and public demands. Yet, it was an agency that, though it was answerable to the Party, had much leeway to interpret Party policies and instructions. This meant that there was not one unified vision for what Soviet documentaries should look like in terms of their structure, content, or ideological vision.[9]

[8] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 101-104
[9] Ibid., 105.

NEP documentary filmmaking abilities (like Soviet feature filmmaking capabilities) were severely limited by low production levels and a lack of reach. It was a small artisanal industry characterized by a handful of cameramen and filmmakers, a small number of make-shift studios, and a complete lack of Soviet film technology. The places of documentary film production were make-shift studios located in former warehouses and basements. These were poorly equipped, with little to no heat in winter. The country's handful of documentary filmmakers and cameramen set up laboratories with whatever equipment they could find or acquire, mostly used, from the West, with little funding from the state. The country's several dozen filmmakers and cameramen working in documentary were self-taught and many did not see eye to eye with the Bolsheviks. Soviet documentaries and newsreels were seen by few in the countryside due to low production in terms of films, copies, and due to a lack of a national network of exhibiting films.[10]

The film technology used by Soviet cameramen and filmmakers working both the feature and documentary filmmaking industry of the Soviet Union throughout the 1920s was foreign-made. It was a hodge-podge of cameras from Germany, France, and other countries. The lenses were produced abroad. And finally, the film stock itself was all foreign-made, either in Germany or the United States. All of this film technology was expensive to purchase new, while used equipment frequently broke down and was expensive and took time to repair, as the needed parts either had to be imported or taken from other used imported cameras. To pay for the foreign technology, the Soviet Union under the NEP imported and exhibited foreign feature films in the country's urban theaters. [11]

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[10] Ibid., 43-44, 78-98.
[11] See, Vance Kepley Jr., "'Cinefication': Soviet film exhibition in the 1920s," *Film History* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1994): 262-277.

The Bolsheviks were concerned that Soviet cinema under the NEP was still woefully inadequate: the country was not producing enough films, the Soviet Union was relying too heavily on Western film technology, the film industry was operating too much like a capitalist endeavor, and too many foreign films with representing capitalist tastes and values reached Soviet audiences. They wanted to abolish NEP in favor of greater state control and involvement in Soviet society, and cinema specifically.[12] Yet, Bolshevik leaders were in a struggle for power and concerned with figuring out the economic direction of the country and this meant that reconfiguring documentary into a weapon of state propaganda would need to wait.

A Cohort of Film Experts Dedicated to Documentary Works and Provides Ideas, 1924–26

The semi-open period of NEP though provided a variety of film experts interested in documentary filmmaking the opportunity to develop and present their ideas and produce works that competed for the attention of Soviet leaders about the right path for Soviet documentary cinema to take. Some, such as Dziga Vertov,[13] who had worked for the Bolsheviks during the Civil War on the *Kinonedelia* newsreel series, called for a revolutionary documentary cinema without narrative form, aimed at intellectuals, one that reflected his vision for documentary. He boasted to critics and to the Bolsheviks that he and his *Kinoglaz* (Film Eye) movement best represented the revolutionary spirit of documentary and of filmmaking in general that the Bolsheviks were seeking.[14]

Other film experts though were more interested in a Soviet documentary that could be easily understood, serve the interests of the Soviet state, and reach the widest possible audiences

[12] For excellent treatments of the failures that the Bolsheviks saw in Soviet cinema in the 1920s, see Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema*, and Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*.
[13] Vertov is the Soviet documentary filmmaker and expert who has received the most scholarly treatment.
[14] Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema in the Silent Era*, 79.

domestically and abroad. Such individuals included the well-known Esfir' Shub, but also Nikolai Lebedev and Grigorii Boltianskii, and other lesser-known names such as Aleksandr Katsigras, Petr Novitskii, Evgenii Slavinskii, Vladimir Shneiderov, Vladimir Erofeev, Grigorii Giber, and Aleksandr Levitskii. During the NEP they turned to writing articles and producing works to convince Soviet leaders that their approaches and ideas about documentary would best serve Soviet interests. They worked towards the day when, as they saw it, documentary's true potential could be unleashed to reach millions across the Soviet Union and the globe with Party messages. They would have their chance to shine, when Stalin came to power, as their vision and his came together when reconfiguring Soviet cinema. I will discuss the cohort and focus on three figures: Grigorii Boltianskii, Nikolai Lebedev, and Esfir' Shub.

Boltianskii first began work in documentary in 1917 during World War I for the Skobelev Committee of the Assistance to Wounded Solders under the Tsarist regime.[15] Boltianskii and his group of cameramen filmed the February Revolution. Yet, after the formation of the Provisional Government, Boltianskii became a backer of the Bolsheviks which allowed him to work closely with them to film key moments during their seizure of power in October. Having produced footage of some of the most important events of the Bolshevik's ascent to power, Lenin hand-picked Boltianskii to head the Soviet Union's first newsreel section from 1918–20 within the Petrograd Film Committee. Lenin then had Boltianskii lead the newsreel division of the All-Russian Photo and Film Department of the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment from 1920–22. As Lenin fell ill, Boltianskii continued to work on documentaries and newsreels at Zevzapkino from 1922–24, receiving privileged access to shoot footage of Lenin's funeral.[16]

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[15] Peter Gatrell, *Russia's First World War: A Social and Economic History* (New York and London: Routledge, 20015), 88. The Skobelev Committee's aim was to encourage audiences to donate to assist the war wounded, orphans, and refugees. The Committee also produced partriotic films shown to soldiers at the frontline.
[16] S. Iutkevich, ed., *Kinoslovar' v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1966), 210.

Following Lenin's death, Lunacharskii appointed Boltianskii in charge of documentary filmmaking efforts at the new national film agency Goskino from 1924–26. During his time at Goskino under the NEP, Boltianskii wrote several important works about the power of the documentary genre to inform and transform audiences and expanded on Lenin's views of the importance of documentary, the importance of bringing documentary film to the countryside in the Soviet Union, and explaining how Soviet cameramen and filmmakers should approach and shoot footage for newsreels. Boltianskii also became intimately involved in spreading the popularity of cinema and documentary specifically, in the Soviet Union, by organizing two large film exhibits in 1925 and 1926.[17]

Nikolai Lebedev, like Boltianskii, also joined the Communist Party early on during the Revolution. He began his career as a literary correspondent for the Bolshevik newspaper *News* (*Izvestiia*) from 1917–18, and he became a member of the Communist Party in 1918. In 1919, he joined the frontlines in the Civil War on the side of the Bolsheviks, where he served until 1921. Lebedev was interested in developing a Marxist-Leninist vision for documentary cinema in the Soviet Union. Following the Civil War, he began working as a film critic writing for the official Party newspaper *Truth* (*Pravda*) and other newspapers such as *Workers' Paper* (*Rabochaia gazeta*), *Moscow Theatre* (*Teatral'naia Moskva*), and other official Bolshevik press outlets, where he came to write articles on film and documentary film from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. Then, in 1923, Lebedev founded the film journal *Proletarian Film* (*Proletkino*) and became its editor. From 1923–24, together with another film colleague, V. Erofeev, he founded and edited the newspaper *Film* (*Kino*). In the meantime, Lebedev attended the Institute of Red Professors of

[17] Ibid.

Literature and Art (*Institut krasnoi professury literatury i iskusstva*) where his dissertation, "On the Specifics of Film," was the first Marxist interpretation of the sociology of cinema.[18]

Lebedev founded and became the first secretary of ARK (Association of Revolutionary Cinematography), aimed at establishing and maintaining ideological control over the making of Soviet films, and a member of its governing board from 1924–26. During his time at ARK, Lebedev was the chief editor of the theoretical monthly film journal *Film Journal of ARK* (*Kinozhurnal ARK*). Also, in 1924, he published a brochure explaining filmmaking in the West entitled *Kino na zapade* and a book about the history of film and its potential in the Soviet Union and its future entitled *Kino—ego istoriia, ego vozmozhnosti, ego stroitel'stvo v Sovetskom gosudarstve*.[19] In 1925, Lebedev became involved in script writing, becoming director of the documentary film (*kul'turfil'm*) division of Goskino. During his tenure as director, he produced five full-length documentary films and continued to write about both the production and creative sides of Soviet documentary and newsreel.[20]

Finally, there was Esfir' Shub, also an early Bolshevik supporter. Shub worked as a personal secretary in the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment under Lunacharskii during the Civil War, where she came to know Lunacharskii personally. Lunacharskii came to trust Shub and, in 1922, with Lenin fallen ill, he appointed Shub as editor at Goskino, with the responsibility of editing all foreign feature films to be exhibited in the Soviet Union so that they would meet Bolshevik standards by removing "capitalist" messages that could infect Soviet citizens.[21]

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[18] S. Kondratov, *Bol'shaia Entsiklopediia: V shestidesiati tomakh*, vol. 25 (Moscow: Terra, 2006), 372.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Nikolai Lebedev, "Ot Shkoly k VUZu," in VGIK, *Vsesoiuznyi gosudarstvennyi institut kinematografii, 1919-1969* (Mosow: Pervaia Obrastsovaia tipografiia imeni A. A. Zhdanov, 1970), as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 350.
[21] S. Iutkevich, ed., *Kinoslovar' v dvukh tomakh*, vol. 2 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1966), 964.

Just as important, Shub also became friends with the talented Soviet film director, Sergei Eisenstein, helping him produce Soviet feature films. Shub learned from Eisenstein, who was interested in producing feature films that could incorporate cinematic aspects of both feature and documentary filmmaking when representing revolutionary events in the recent Soviet past. As such, Eisenstein had Shub locate and edit documentary footage to be include in his early feature films. She became adept at editing, locating, labelling, and organizing documentary footage, something that would prove critical to her career and the development and operation of Soviet documentary and newsreel filmmaking under Joseph Stalin.[22]

Esfir' Shub Draws Attention to Poor Archival Practices and to the Power of Documentary to Serve as an Official Record of the Past, 1926–27

In 1926, with Stalin emerging victorious over his rivals Trotsky, Zinoviev, and Kamenev, expelling all three from decision-making, the political winds began to shift in the nascent Soviet state. By late summer of 1926, a war scare began to take hold amongst the Party leadership, particularly for Stalin that ostensibly Western powers planned to redraw the map of Eastern Europe and invade the Soviet Union.

The memory of World War I and foreign intervention on Russian soil during the Civil War was still fresh, and the idea that another war would come from foreign powers weighed heavily on the Bolsheviks. Stalin argued that Western imperialists were still trying to subvert the revolution and would stop at nothing, including all-out war and invasion, to put an end to the construction of communism in the Soviet Union. Should the country be invaded and not have a modern economy and military, the country could possibly be occupied, and the communist regime and system be

[22] Esfir' Shub, *Zhizn' moia kinematograf: Krupnym planom* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1972), 8–9.

swept away. Stalin decided that Soviet society had to be placed on a war footing and had to be transformed into a militarized industrial state to withstand an attack.

Yet, much of the country's documentary footage, newsreels, and documentaries of important Soviet historic events, leaders, and so on were strewn across a variety of small, ill-equipped, and unorganized warehouses and archives, some controlled by the state, while more than not were in the hands of private studios. Important footage and films had been lost or were deteriorating due to the disorganization and improper handling of archived film material.[23] To make matters worse, foreign film companies and archives held a great deal of footage of Vladimir Lenin that the Soviet Union did not even have in its possession.[24]

The poor situation with archived Soviet documentary footage and films caused Shub great concern. She recognized that with the threat of war on the horizon, documentary could help the Soviet state with an official narrative of its past for current and future generations. However, in order to do this, the country had to have the ability to properly locate, administer, and preserve footage, films, and newsreels. In other words, it had to have a modern, organized, centralized, and properly run and staffed state-run film archive. She expressed her support of the idea in 1926 to the Bolsheviks in the following way: "the development of a method, problems of form, the organization of a 'film archive' (*fil'moteka*), organically connected to the documentary studio, this is what we should be working, working, working towards!"[25] Boltianskii agreed with his colleague, writing in *Pravda* from July 25, 1926 that he too was concerned and in favor of better

[23] Shub, *Zhizn' moia kinematograf*, 101.
[24] Ibid., 103.
[25] Ibid., 246.

preserving documentary footage of historic significance so that new films could be quickly produced for future generations.[26]

The Council of People's Commissars (*Sovnarkom*) agreed in principle with Shub and Boltianskii deciding to store and administer all historically significant photographs and documentary films in one centrally located and controlled state archive, should war break out and these materials need to be evacuated.[27] *Sovnarkom* issued a decree on October 12, 1926 on the transfer of all negatives of photographs and films having historical-revolutionary interest at the republican level to the Archive of the October Revolution.[28] The film and photo division of the archive was hailed by the collegiate of the Central Archive of the RSFSR (*Tsentrarkhiv*) as being "the world's first central archive of photo and film images" which would have a special system of storage, a film and photo laboratory, as well as a special area for exhibiting films.[29]

The problem, though, was that the Archive of the October Revolution was not built to store either documentary films or photographs. It did not have the proper temperature and humidity to preserve film. And there were few experts on hand to upgrade the archive to store footage properly. The real solution was for the Soviet Union to construct a new separate documentary film archive manned by professional archivists and preservationists. However, the Soviet government had neither the resources, nor the personnel, or know-how to do this at the time.[30]

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[26] Grigorii Boltianskii, "We Need to Preserve Pieces of History" ("Nado khranit' kusochki istorii"), *Pravda*, July 25, 1926, 7, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 537.
[27] V. N. Batalin and G. E. Malysheva, "The Moscow Period of the History of the Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents (1926–1953)" ("Moskovskii period v istorii Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva kinofotodokumentov (1926–1953 gg.)"), *Otechestvennye arkhivy* 5 (2006): 11.
[28] Ibid.
[29] *Federal'noe arkhivnoe agentstvo Rossiiskii gosudarstvenyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov (RGAKFD): Putevoditel' po kinofotodokumentam Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo arkhiva kinofotodokumentov (RGAKFD)* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2010), 11.
[30] Batalin and Malysheva, "The Moscow Period," 11-12.

Instead, the Bolsheviks adopted a make-shift solution to place and store documentary films, newsreels, and footage both at the various smaller archives and warehouses at the country's various semi-private film studios and with the new film division at the Archive of the October Revolution (formerly the Central Archive of the RSFSR). The result was depressing, as films and footage of historic significance continued to degrade and deteriorate at an alarming rate and the archives themselves were disorganized. Many of the Soviet Union's archived documentary films would continue to never make it to the public for exhibition.[31]

Shub was appalled at the continued poor state of the country's film archives and the government's solution. She made it her cause to prove to the Bolshevik regime that a properly run and organized central documentary film archive containing adequate amounts of documentary footage and films that could be easily located and used was of utmost importance. With the ten-year anniversary of the October Revolution approaching, she had the opportunity to do so. She proposed to *Sovkino* to give her permission to produce three documentary films based on clips from a variety of historic footage and films to commemorate the fall of the Romanov dynasty and the February and the October Revolutions. She aimed to convince her colleagues and the Party of the poor state of affairs with archived footage and films, the importance of properly run and organized film archives, that the Soviet state ensure that Soviet film archives acquire key footage and films of the Soviet past, the power of documentary to be an official record of the past, and her own importance to the Party.[32]

With the help of a colleague from the pre-Revolutionary period, Khmel'nitskii, Shub took on the tremendous job of finding historic footage in disparate locations both within and outside

[31] For an in-depth exposition of the development of the State Archive of Documentary Film and Photo Documents (RGAKFD) see ibid., 11–21.
[32] Shub, *Zhizn' moia kinematograf,* 99-103.

the Soviet Union, often in a woeful state of decay, covered in rust and emulsion. Khmel'nitskii aided Shub in cleaning and drying footage, which had been sitting in basements gathering dust for years.[33] They were meticulous and conscientious, working through 60,000 meters of footage for the projects.[34] Shub had the foresight of gathering and culling the most historically significant Soviet footage. And after using the footage for the films, Shub made sure to make copies, catalogue, label, and organize the footage, placing it back in the state's archives so that the Bolshevik regime would be able to tap that same footage in the future.[35] Shub described the painstaking process by which she had created the film in an article for *Sovetskii ekran*.[36]

According to Shub and other film critics of the time, the film had impressed them, Soviet leaders, and audiences. During a closed screening of the film where representatives of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, the Communist International (Comintern), the deputy head of the Peoples Commissariat of Foreign Affairs Maksim Litvinov, other old Bolsheviks, the director of the Museum of the Revolution, and the press were present, Litvinov expressed his enthusiasm about the film and pointed out it needed to be shown abroad." Other representatives at the meeting called the film a major landmark of Soviet cinema.[37] Shub was excited when lines formed in Moscow at the theaters screening the film. And at the film's first showing, Shub gauged the reaction of the audience to her film and was relieved by what she witnessed.[38] The Soviet literary, theorist, and film critic Viktor Shklovskii was impressed by the box-office success of Shub's first film commemorating the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution: *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (*Padenie dinastii Romanovykh*) released March 11, 1927. According to

[33] John Carroll Colley, "Esfir' Shub, Sorceress of Montage" (Master Thesis, University of Virginia, 1990), 21, quoting Esfir' Shub, *Krupnym planom* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1959), 100.
[34] Colley, "Esfir' Shub," 25, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 571.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Esfir' Shub, "Fall of the Romanov Dynasty" ("Padenie dinastii Romanovykh"), *Sovetskii ekran* 13 (1927): 10.
[37] Shub, *Zhizn' moia kinematograf*, 104.
[38] Ibid., 105.

Shklovskii, Shub's documentary film had outperformed the expensive feature film Decembrists (*Dekabristy*), produced by Aleksandr Ivanovskii and released in 1926.[39] Finally, the Soviet writer and critic Aleksandr Fadeev during a speech given to proletarian writers in 1928 strongly favored Shub's approach to filmmaking as opposed that of Vertov with his film *A Sixth Part of the World (Shestaia chast' mira)* released in 1926.[40]

With the success of *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty*, Shub embarked on her next film project, gathering old documentary footage and shooting new footage for what would become the full-length documentary *Great Path* (*Velikii put'*) 1927 about the October Revolution. The film also impressed Soviet film critics, Soviet leaders, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, and the international press.[41] Her painstaking work had paid off, Soviet leaders were now much more aware of the potential power of properly run state film archives and for historic documentary footage and films to move audiences.

The Party Calls for the "Socialist Reconstruction" of Soviet Cinema: Film Experts Respond, 1928–31

In early 1928, the Soviet Union experienced a grain-procurement crisis and Stalin called for a "Great Break" (*Velikii perelom*) with the NEP. He pushed the country to adopt a path of crash industrialization and collectivization as a way out of the crisis and to modernize the country. Under the banner of "socialist reconstruction" (*sotsialisticheskaia rekonstruktsiia*) of society, Soviet

[39] Viktor Shklovskii, "The Temperature of Cinema" ("Temperatura Kino"), *Sovetskii ekran* 13 (June 21, 1927): 10, as cited in Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, *The Film Factory: Russian and Soviet Cinema in Documents, 1896–1939* (London: Routledge, 1988), 163.
[40] Shub, *Zhizn' moia kinematograf*, 104.
[41] Ibid., 114-115.

leaders embarked on the transformation of the Soviet Union's filmmaking industry to be able to record for the masses and the world the new epoch it was unleashing.

In late March of 1928, the Council of People's Commissars (*Sovet narodnykh komissarov*, or *Sovnarkom*) created a commission tasked with developing cinema during the First Five-Year Plan in the RSFSR.[42] That same month, the First All-Union Party Conference on Cinema Affairs was organized by the *agitprop* department of the Party Central Committee, in which important Party figures such as Lunacharskii and others took part. The Party Central Committee called for the "socialist reconstruction" of Soviet cinema and promised to decisively reorient the country's filmmaking industry away from a few small, semi-private and independent studios dominated by a handful of auteur filmmakers in the direction of the mass production of films to be shown to millions of people both inside and outside the Soviet Union.[43]

The Party called for both more "fiction films" and "cultural films." The general requirement for documentary and feature films was that they had to be "intelligible to the millions" and, for fiction films specifically, that they not resort to "bourgeois tastes, with no oversimplification or vulgarization of artistic form" and "avoid unhealthy stunts, hooliganism, or pornography."[44] By "cultural films," Party leaders meant newsreels and documentaries devoted to popular scientific, ethnographical, and educational themes, able to convey technical and general knowledge to the populace, and newsreels "that provide a fuller and more varied illumination of the events in the political economic and cultural life of the USSR and abroad." Party leaders also called for newsreels and educational films specifically targeted at children's audiences in the Soviet Union.[45]

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[42] *Kino*, March 6, 1928, 6, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 613.
[43] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 103.
[44] Taylor and Christie, *The Film Factory*, 212.
[45] Ibid., 211–12.

Then in spring 1928, Stalin initiated the Shakhty Affair, accusing miners and engineers of working in collusion with Western counterparts of trying to destroy mine equipment and mines in Ukraine. As part of a media campaign to inform Soviet audiences and the world of the affair and the guilt of the accused, the Party commissioned *Sovkino* to record on film the trials of those accused in the Shakhty Affair from May 18–July 5, 1928. *Sovkino* came through, producing footage and the short documentary film in 1928 entitled *The Affair of the Economic Counter-Revolution in the Donbass* (*Delo ob ekonomicheskoi kontrrevoliutsii v Donbasse*).[46]

On the heels of the Shakhty Affair, Stalin called for greater criticism (*kritika*) and self-criticism (*samo-kritika*) in Soviet society as a way to expose loyalty and disloyalty amongst the population, to garner new ideas from all strata of Soviet society that could be useful to the Soviet regime in building the country, to expose enemies, to mobilize the masses to become involved in the Soviet project, and to educate the Soviet people in how the Soviet Union operated.[47]

Stalin also called for the necessity of a new generation of professionally trained experts from the working classes who would be loyal to socialist project.[48] It was in this climate that Shub, Lebedev, Boltianskii, and others devoted to Soviet documentary pushed for the state to take direct control over Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts and expand the role of documentary film production in the Soviet Union. They did so by arguing in the press that documentary could serve

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[46] RGAKFD, 3660, *Delo ob ekonomicheskoi kontrrevoliutsii v Donbasse*, 1928.

[47] See Joseph Stalin, *Sochineniia: Tom 11, 1928–Mart 1929* (Moscow: State Press of Political Literature, 1949), 28–38. In Stalin's speech to a meeting of the Moscow Organization of the All-Union Communist Party about the work of the April Plenum of the Central Committee from April 13, 1928, he outlined the importance and role of criticism and self-criticism in Soviet society to encourage vigilance, preparations for war, the building of a new Soviet society, mobilizing and educating the Soviet masses, exposing class and foreign enemies, and as related to the Shakhty Affair in the first section on Self-Criticism.

[48] Joseph Stalin, "About the Conclusions of the July Plenum of the Central Committee," from essay by B. Shumiatskii, "Stalin on Cinema," January 1935, taken from "Draft Essay of the work 'Comrade Stalin on Cinema'," January 1935, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 828, l. 88–102, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr,* 81–82.

the state better than feature and attacked documentary filmmakers who were more experimental and independent-minded.

Boltianskii and a younger colleague, Boris Nebylitskii, in December 1929 jointly published an article condemning their more independent-minded colleague in documentary, Vertov, and his films with their article, "The Class Face of Soviet Newsreel" ("Klassovoe litso sovetskoi kinokhroniki"). In the article, Vertov's documentary films, such as *Enthusiasm* (*Entuziazm*) and *Man with a Movie Camera* (*Chelovek s kinoapparatom*) were criticized for being too abstract, too focused on entertainment and having little serious to teach the masses. The two film experts also argued such films could not reach the uneducated masses as they were too difficult to comprehend.[49]

Meanwhile, the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a resolution in January of 1929 underscoring the importance of film to the Soviet regime as a weapon of mass agitation and propaganda to mobilize and enlighten millions in the spirit of the socialist project. The resolution called for new cadres from the proletarian ranks but also the removal of old bourgeois specialists of dubious loyalty.[50]

That spring, in April of 1929, Stalin fanned a hysteria that enemies from within, in collusion with capitalist powers and harboring bourgeois ideas, were attempting to sabotage and wreck the Soviet system. The hysteria around enemies from within as well as the Party's call for liquidating older and less trusted cadres, provided further ammunition for Lebedev, Boltianskii, Shub, and others to relentlessly attack Vertov. They accused him of being a "documentalist" (*dokumentalist*). *Dokumentalist* was a slur used by film critics that carried with it connotations of a documentary

[49] G. Boltianskii and B. Nebylitskii, "The Class Face of Soviet Documentary ("Klassovoe litso sovetskoi kinokhroniki"), *Kino*, December 31, 1929, 2–3, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 678.
[50] Central Committee resolution on the strengthening of film cadres, January 11, 1929, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 692, l. 2, 4, 15, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Krelmevskii kinoteatr*, 97–99.

filmmaker who produced bourgeois and capitalist films unfit for the Soviet Union and its new reconstructive era. Vertov fought back, writing a number of articles defending himself, openly attacking his accusers, specifically his most outspoken critics—Lebedev and the Party film critic Sutyrin.[51]

In the meantime, the world's largest economy began to falter. In October 1929, the United States' stock market crashed and the developed world entered into an economic tailspin. Stalin was convinced that the capitalist world was on the verge of collapse and would stir up a final war with the Soviet Union in which the Soviet Union, due to its superior ideology and society, would emerge triumphant. To prove the point and unmask the capitalist world's intentions, Stalin called on Soviet arts, including cinema, to produce works that would convey such messages.

Shub now took to attacking Soviet feature. In 1929, in articles entitled "Victory or Defeat" ("Pobeda ili porazhenie") published in the newspaper *Kino*[52] and "Non-Fiction Film" ("Neigroavaia fil'ma") published in *Kino i kul'tura*, she made known her disdain, suspicion, and even jealousy vis-à-vis feature filmmaking.[53] Aleksandr Katsigras, another Soviet film critic dedicated to documentary, put forth the idea that the documentary genre was more immediate and more effective in conveying communist propaganda, ideology, narratives, and representations than feature films, which he argued were figments of one's imagination based on imagined plots and actors and therefore too dissociated from reality. Documentary, on the other hand, captured real life directly on film. He also made the more practical point that feature films were expensive for

[51] See, the articles published in *Proletarskoe kino* from the end of March of 1932, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 162.
[52] Esfir' Shub, "Victory or Defeat" ("Pobeda ili porazhenie"), *Kino* August 27, 1929, 1, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 668.
[53] Esfir' Shub, "Unplayed Film" ("Neigrovaia fil'ma"), *Kino i kul'tura* 5–6 (1929): 6–11, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 669.

the Soviet state to produce in large quantities, while documentaries could be produced, distributed, and shown on the cheap.[54]

Katsigras argued that documentary should constitute a larger proportion of Soviet film output than feature. He argued such a position in an article in *Kino i kul'tura* from 1929, in which he quoted Kirill Shutko, the chief-editor of *Sovetskii ekran*, as saying that "we must put before the cinematographic industry such instructions so that within five years the proportion of films being produced is broken up as follows—75% scientific-popular films (*nauchno-populiarnye fil'my*), and 25% feature films."[55] What he meant by scientific-popular films were those from the documentary genre.

The Party reacted by passing a resolution in December 7, 1929 specifically aimed at expanding the production and exhibition of "political-enlightenment films" (*politiko-prosvetitel'nye fil'my*), better known as documentaries and newsreels throughout the Soviet Union. Echoing Shub, the resolution explained that one of the main reasons for the Party's decision was the fact that "at present we exclusively show feature films." The Party resolution called for "the widest diffusion of 'political-enlightenment films' (political, production-technical, military, travel, children's).[56]

The resolution came none too soon, as the Soviet Union organized and sent into the countryside "cultural shock brigades" (*udarnye kul'tbrigady*) to agitate and propagandize amongst the peasants during the collectivization campaign in the coming spring.[57] As part of that process, a circular from the People's Commissariat of Enlightenment and the All-Union Extraordinary

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[54] A. Katsigras, "Cultural Film (Organizational Questions)" ("Kul'turfil'ma (Organizatsionnye voprosy"), *Kino i kul'tura* 4 (1929): 10.
[55] Ibid.
[56] *Kino*, December 17, 1929, 1, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 677.
[57] *Ezhenedel'nik Narkomprosa RSFSR* 51 (1929): 10-11, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 678.

Commission for the Liquidation of Illiteracy from December 17, 1929 called for political-enlightenment work to include film exhibition to peasants.[58] Meanwhile, the Soviet Union reorganized *Sovkino* and renamed it *Soiuzkino* in February 1930 further placing the entire country's filmmaking industry under centralized state control.[59]

Eshurin, who had proved his usefulness in producing documentary footage of the Shakhty Affair published an article in the newspaper *Kino* on November 27, 1930 entitled "Documentary Needs a Factory" ("Khronike nuzhna fabrika"), where he called for Soviet documentary and newsreel efforts to have their own studio and production capabilities separate from feature filmmaking.[60] Up until then, newsreel and documentaries were being produced as part of the same department and space as feature filmmaking within *Sovkino*.[61] It was an important step in professionalizing the genre and elevating its importance in the Soviet Union.

At this point, Stalin appointed Boris Shumiatskii, a vetted administrator but one who had little experience in cinema, to head *Soiuzkino* in December 1930.[62] Shumiatskii together with film administrators and film studio cadres called for expanding the capabilities of the country's filmmaking industry at a meeting of *Soiuzkino*, which focused on the path forward to reconstructing Soviet cinema.[63] Meanwhile, on January 3, 1931, *Soiuzkino* issued a resolution to create the All-Union Newsreel Film Trust (*Soiuzkinokhronika*) separate from feature filmmaking.[64] The new trust would be located in Moscow and take direct control over all the

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[58] Ibid.
[59] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 128-129.
[60] V. Eshurin, "Documentary Needs a Factory" ("Khronike nuzhna fabrika"), *Kino*, 65–66, November 27, 1930, 6, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 62.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Kenez, Cinema and Soviet Society, 128.
[63] Meeting at *Soiuzkino* of film administrators and studio film cadres about the paths to reconstruct Soviet cinematography, January 23-25, 1931, RGALI, f. 2497, op. 1, d. 39, no l., as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930-1945*, 89.
[64] As cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 150.

country's semi-independent newsreel and documentary production units in Leningrad, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia and Azerbaijan, and elsewhere.[65]

Soiuzkino informed Molotov in January 1931 that the Soviet Union had a very limited capacity (due to a lack of professional cadres, resources, and technology) to produce documentaries and newsreels (as well as feature films) on a mass scale. *Soiuzkino* stressed that the cadres working in documentary and newsreel were not qualified, not professionally trained, and were relying on poor film technology and producing poor quality films. One of the solutions suggested by *Soiuzkino* was to have the Soviet Union introduce the professional training of a new generation of film cadres to work in documentary and newsreel.[66]

Simultaneously, Shub, Lebedev, and Boltianskii, and other film experts again launched a campaign of attack against feature filmmaking and argued documentary was the nimbler genre to record the epoch. Sutyrin, the chief editor of *Proletarskoe kino*, in an article written for the first issue of the journal entitled, 'On the Socialist Reconstruction of Cinematography' ("O sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii kinematografii") in January 1931, argued that feature films took much longer time to produce than a newsreel or documentary film.[67]

Indeed, in many respects, Sutyrin was right. Soviet feature films were taking an average between six months to a full year to produce due to the constant edits to script development, the long process of choosing vetted actors and actresses, and reedits to a film. The number of feature films being shelved had increased markedly, which was a waste of resources and time, and—if the film was about a current topic—it made it increasingly likely it would be outdated (*neakutal'naia*)

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[65] Ibid.
[66] Memorandum from *Soiuzkino* to Molotov, About the state of Soviet cinematography, January 1931, RGALI, f. 2497, op. 1, d. 49, l. 2-16, in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930-1945*, 91.
[67] Vladimir Sutyrin, "On the Socialist Reconstruction of Cinematography" ("O sotsialisticheskoi rekonstruktsii kinematografii"), *Proletarskoe kino* (January 1931): 15.

once released to audiences. Newsreels and documentaries increasingly followed prescribed scripts and Soviet journalistic norms that made them faster and easier to produce than feature. It was also true that newsreels and documentaries were much less expensive to produce as they did not need sets or actors. A newsreel could be finished within several days to weeks and a full-length documentary within a month or several months.[68]

Official film critics in the press also in January 1931 opened a line of attack aimed at what they considered the remaining elements of bourgeois filmmaking in the Soviet Union. Sutyrin was one of the most aggressive, writing articles for *Proletarskoe kino*, where he labeled cinematography in the West as the "commercial screen" (*kommercheskii ekran*), he called for a stop to copying the West and the creation of a truly Soviet documentary cinema.[69]

As part of his attack on "bourgeois theories in film," Sutyrin also called for Soviet documentary to finally rid itself of any imitation of capitalist documentary and for Soviet documentary to not have any overlap with Soviet feature. He argued that in the West, documentaries and newsreels were too entertaining and carried little social or revolutionary content, rather reflecting and defending bourgeois life. Soviet documentary and newsreel rather had to directly speak to and mobilize the working classes and peasants in the country and abroad in a distinctly Soviet and revolutionary way to build a just socialist society completely different from capitalism. Finally, Sutyrin pointed out that Soviet documentary was better suited for the times as it was based on real footage and not "acted out" or "staged footage" (*instsenirovki*) as was the case in feature filmmaking. He called for a clearer distinction between Soviet feature films and documentaries now that the two trades had been separated into two distinct studios with their own

[68] Ibid.
[69] Vladimir Sutyrin, "What is 'Proletarian cinema'?" ("Shto znachit 'Proletarskoe kino?'"), *Proletarskoe Kino* (January 1931): 1.

annual conferences and priorities. He attacked such directors as Sergei Eisenstein and Mikhail Room for producing feature films disguising themselves as documentaries. Feature, he argued, should stick to being purely fictional and entertaining, while documentary should be factual and serious in nature.[70]

Finally, the film critic, Erofeev, in an article in *Proletarskoe kino* in March 1931, went further than Sutyrin, arguing before the Party and colleagues that documentary should be considered a more advanced form of communication than feature filmmaking because it relied on a new technological innovation, the hand-held camera, to reach the next stage in the development of cinema away from fixed cameras and staged footage of life towards true reality (*podlinnaia deistvitel'nost'*).[71]

The Push to Expand and Professionalize Documentary Film Education, 1931–33

Intent on expanding Soviet documentary and newsreel production and reach, Lebedev, Boltianskii, Shub, and other allies now turned their attention towards professionalizing their craft and educating a new generation of cadres to help build and sustain a Soviet mass documentary and newsreel industry. The idea of professionalizing Soviet cinema, and documentary specifically, by training more personnel including cameramen and filmmakers with capable of producing footage and films on a mass scale for the country, was not a new one.

As early as May of 1927, Soviet Professor F.P. Shipulinskii, who would later come to teach the history of film at the State Institute for Cinematography (GIK), wrote a piece in *Kino* in which he argued that the time had come for the country to train a new generation of professional film

[70] Ibid.
[71] Vladimir Erofeev, "The Technical Innovation of Documentary Film" ("Tekhnicheskoe novatorstvo dokumental'noi fil'my"), *Proletarskoe kino*, 2 (March 1931): 4–13.

workers who would have the right outlook and knowledge to push Soviet filmmaking forward. "We know now that even poets are not born but are forged, and we are creating institutes and schools for that. Furthermore, we need education in cinema, where the art-form is so connected to knowledge and technology. However, the State Technical College of Cinematography should not only educate, but must cultivate a new cadres of film workers in the spirit of proletarian-revolutionary ideology and Soviet construction, the lack of which we see today on the screen."[72]

Another article appeared in *Kino* in July of 1927, in which Mikhail Schneider argued that Soviet cinematography critically needed more cultural workers and specialists in cinematography properly trained at the country's higher education institutes to work in all spheres of cinematography instead of "self-taught" (*samo-uchki*) individuals like Vertov, Eisenstein, and their colleagues. Schneider also called for a reorientation in the kind of education being given to film workers from being overly Western and American, and instead emphasizing that Soviet cinema had to have its own face, its own path, differing from the cinema of capitalist countries.[73] Film critics argued that what was also needed was a unified and single approach to educating cadres in filmmaking and for the state to take under its wing all the country's private educational institutions where most new film workers were being trained so that a unified and single approach could be introduced.[74]

Party leaders also made clear in March 1928 in its final conclusion to the First All-Union Party Conference of Soviet Cinema that the lack of film cadres in Soviet cinema was on its mind, stating that "the shortage of highly qualified workers is still exerting a very negative effect on

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[72] F.P. Shipulinskii, "What They Are Saying about the Graduating Class of the Moscow State Technical Institute of Cinema" ("Shto govoriat o vypuske moskovskogo GTK"), *Kino*, May 31, 1927, as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 67.
[73] F.P. Shipulinskii, "How Are They Training Specialists?" ("Kak gotovit' spetsialistov?"), *Kino*, July 19, 1927, as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 68–69.
[74] Mikhail Shneider, "The State Technical Institute of Cinema" ("GTK"), *Kino*, July 19, 1927, as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 69–70.

cinema activity." The solution proposed was that in conjunction with "carefully and fully utilizing all the experience of the old film workers," the Party would push for new cadres, specifically from the "active core of workers and peasant correspondents," and "prepar[e] new cadres through the appropriate provision of cinema training (which must be closely tied with film production) and also through groups of apprentices aided by the most valuable film workers, and attrac[t] the cinema's younger generation."[75]

Yet, in 1929, the country still had a paltry number of professionally trained cameramen and filmmakers working in documentary and newsreel. Speaking about the work of the documentary (*kul'turfil'm*) division at the Moscow production unit (*fabrika*) of *Sovkino*, Nikolai Kolin, in an article for *Kino i kul'tura*, pointed to the appallingly low number of individuals employed by the *kul'turfil'ma* production unit at the Moscow division of *Sovkino*: "Out of a contingent of full-time employees at the division, only five persons work on newsreels (including cameramen, editors, and montage workers). Across the USSR, there is an inadequate network of full-time correspondents." Indeed, there were a mere twenty individuals.[76]

Soviet documentary was still under-staffed in 1931 and in need of more cadres and cameramen, as seasoned cameraman A. Shapovolov, speaking at the All-Ukrainian Meeting of Workers of Newsreels in August of 1931, pointed out.[77] Another film expert speaking at the All-Ukrainian Meeting of Workers of Newsreels lamented the lack of professionally trained cadres in late August of 1931 in the following way: "We have a very bad situation with the issue of cadres today. I asked my comrades, how are things at the Kiev Institute, are newsreel workers being

[75] B. S. Ol'khova, ed., *Puti kino: Vsesoiuznoe partiinoe soveshchanie po kinematografii* (Moscow: Tea-kino-pechat', 1929), 429–44, as cited in Taylor and Christie, *The Film Factory*, 212–13.
[76] Nikolai Kolin, "The Moscow Factories of *Sovkino*: The Cultural Film Factories" ("Moskovskie fabriki *Sovkino*: Fabriki kul'turfil'm"), *Kino i kul'tura* 1, no. 7–8 (1929): 66.
[77] Ibid.

trained there, they told me—no, all graduates are being trained for the feature, and travelogue film (*vidovoi fil'm*). In Moscow, it is the same situation, the institute there is not training workers in this [the newsreel] specialty. In Leningrad, it's the same. Therefore, cadres are not being specifically trained, but rather randomly trained." He went on to say that the issue had already been raised with higher authorities and administrators, so that "at every institute of cinematography there would be created special departments devoted to training newsreel workers (*rabotnikov khroniki*)."[78]

The Political Bureau of the Communist Party responded in December of 1931 with a resolution requesting that *Soiuzkino* develop a specific plan to train new cadres in general who would be employed in Soviet cinema. *Pravda* also published an article the same month calling for the training of more cadres in line with the Party's vision for a reconstructed cinema that could reach millions with output that was ideologically sound.[79] As part of the Party's resolution, the Politburo instructed *Soiuzkino* to expand the country's educational institutions and to build new educational institutions to professionally train more film cadres.[80]

Meanwhile, the winter of 1932 saw large swaths of the country gripped by a state-induced famine as collectivization and crash industrialization took a painful toll on the peasantry. The Party launched a campaign to expose and punish internal and external enemies blamed for the suffering, including concocted saboteurs, spies, and capitalists. Again, the regime introduced a series of

[78] Speeches about documentary filmmaking at the All-Ukrainian Conference of Workers of Documentary: Transcript of the conference with speeches by R. G. Grigoriev (Katsman), A. N. Kozakov, A. N. Shapovalov, August 29, 1931, RGALI, f. 2986, op. 1, d. 81, l. 22.
[79] "On Bolshevik Tracks" ("Na Bol'shevitskskie rel'sy"), *Pravda*, December 14, 1931, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr 1928–1953 dokumenty*, 111–14.
[80] Resolution of the Central Committee "About Soviet cinematography from December 8, 1931, No. 29," RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 864, l. 57–62, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 159.

purges to replace individuals in positions of power accused of viewpoints contrary to the Party with more vetted individuals.[81]

As the famine engulfed the country, the Party employed state terror and purges in the arts to achieve greater control over culture. A wave of greater centralization and direction from the Party spread in the arts and with greater censorship from Moscow. The Party fired the director of the country's top education institution (GIK) and the institution became a confused place without a director. As one film worker put it in 1932, "We are trying to achieve a breakthrough in those matters which we have been tasked with, yet no one will take upon himself the function of director." "Management, a leader of GIK—is necessary."[82]

The temporary director at GIK, A. Poiarkov, in October of 1932 set up a separate department of documentary cinema and a roster of faculty and administrative heads was issued[83] in which he appointed Boltianskii to head the department. Yet, in an atmosphere of fear, repression, and reorganization of filmmaking in general, the training new cadres at GIK would come to a virtual standstill. The country's premier educational institution for filmmaking was being overhauled from GIK (State Institute for Cinematography) to VGIK (All-Union State Institute of Cinematography) in 1931–32. The year 1932 saw GIK graduate from its department of documentary cinema only two students who went on to become prominent documentarians in the Soviet Union: Mikhail Slutskii and Roman Karmen.[84] In February 1933, *Soiuzkino* was reorganized and renamed the Chief Directorate of the Film and Photo Industry (GUKF). As part

[81] Peter Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union from the Beginning to the End* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 99-102.
[82] Resolution of the Central Committee "About Soviet cinematography from December 8, 1931, No. 29," RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 864, l. 57–62, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 159.
[83] Resolution No. 1 at the State Institute for Cinematography sent by the director of the institute A. Piarkov, from October 12, 1932, as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 164.
[84] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 367.

of the restructuring, GUKF now answered directly to the Council of People's Commissars.[85] The year 1933, the first year of the Second Five-Year Plan, saw no students graduate from any faculty at VGIK.[86]

The Nazi Seizure of Power: Film Experts Professionalize and Expand Documentary Film Education, 1934

In January 1934, the Communist Party held the Seventeenth Party Congress, also called the Congress of Victors, where Stalin and other Party leaders boasted of the achievements of Soviet socialism. Stalin announced that life in the Soviet Union had reached a new zenith, calling on Soviet cultural workers to represent the joy, thrill, and adventure of the epoch to the Soviet people and to the world.[87]

Meanwhile, in Europe, the National Socialist Party, led by Adolf Hitler further consolidated its power in Germany between 1933 and 1934. On August 2, 1934, Hitler became both Chancellor and President of Germany, calling himself Fuhrer, and further cementing his dictatorial powers. The Nazis' ideology was openly hostile to Communism and moved towards its eradication in Germany.[88]

At the First Congress of Soviet Writers held in August 1934, Stalin's minister of propaganda, Andrei Zhdanov, underlined that all arts in the Soviet Union needed to portray Stalin's announcement that Soviet happiness had been achieved. As part of the official doctrine of socialist

[85] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 130.
[86] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 367.
[87] *XVII s'ezd Vsesoiuznyi kommunisticheskoi partii (b) 26 ianvaria-10 fevralia 1934 g.: stenograficheskii otchet* (Moscow: Partizdat, 1934).
[88] Dietrich Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany: 1871-Present* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education Incorporated, 2002), 184-185.

realism being introduced, Soviet cultural workers were called upon to create works relevant and understandable to workers portraying socialism being built and the fruits of socialism.[89]

Relying on the new doctrine of socialist realism and the Stalin's call for portraying the thrill, joy, and happiness of the Stalinist epoch, film experts again argued before Soviet leaders that newsreels and documentaries should be the preferred medium to capture the epoch, its people, achievements, events, and places on film and not actors, sets, or made up scripts. They also argued the medium would better stand the test of time for future generations than feature. At the Third All-Union Conference of Newsreel Workers from December 1934, the head of the Central Committee of the Union of Film-Photo Workers, Pavel Bliakhin, a veteran author and script writer who had worked in Soviet feature filmmaking, argued that the newsreel was the only real film source that could adequately convey the historical significance of the epoch they were living through for present and future generations. "It will be the newsreel, from the point of view of history, that will have completely priceless significance,"[90] because documentary films and footage could be reshown in the future to remind audiences of a glorious past, as an aid for teaching Soviet history, and because the footage could serve as historical evidence for historians to work through. "In actual fact, if the newsreel, like the newspaper, is able to reflect our reality, is able to represent this reality as it is, then what we will get is that over time, thanks to the newsreel, in several years, people will research those materials in order to understand what the epoch of socialist construction represented. […] This is extremely important because we need to understand

[89] Maksim Gorky, H.G. Scott et al, *Soviet Writers' Congress 1934: The Debate on Socialist Realism and Modernism in the Soviet Union* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1977).
[90] Transcript of a meeting of the Third All-Union Conference of Workers of Newsreel and Documentary, December 28, 1934, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 11, l. 45.

that, namely through the newsreel, we will be able to convey Soviet reality truthfully and show it not only to our present generation but to future generations."[91]

Bliakhin continued by contrasting Soviet documentary and newsreel to feature filmmaking: "Feature cinematography, save for films from the past few years, has not reflected the period adequately, while documentary, through its new films, has given us enormous slices of socialist construction. This documentary material, from a historic point of view, will have completely invaluable importance. We must think about this." He provided the analogy that documentary was like a good wine; it only got better with age, while feature films went sour after three to four years. In this way, documentary, according to Bliakhin, was in a better position to perpetuate an official history of the Soviet past for future generations. He proposed that the Soviet government produce more types and genres of documentary and newsreel. In this way, the epoch that had been unleashed could be recorded from many angles for present and future generations.[92]

In the meantime, Lebedev became the first director of the newly renamed and reorganized All-Union State Institute of Cinematography (VGIK).[93] Lebedev turned his attention to expanding the education and professionalization of documentary film cadres at VGIK.

Lebedev had been pushing for the expansion and professionalization of documentary film education at the country's leading film institute as early as 1931. That year, he had been invited by the directorate of GIK to begin working in pedagogy. Lebedev first organized a cameraman department of "film journalism" (*kinopublitsistika*) within GIK.[94] He worked with the chair of the cameraman department, N. Baklinyi, to come up with a course outline and schedule of classes for

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[91] Ibid., 47.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 362.
[94] Lebedev, "Ot Shkoly k VUZu," as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 350.

the new major of documentary (newsreel) cameraman. The two personally chose the lecturers for the courses. By the fall of 1931, they had come up with new documentary film courses included in the course schedule.[95]

Now Lebedev introduced several distinct paths of education and training for students, including documentary and newsreel specifically.[96] In August 1934, Lebedev issued a resolution dividing the institute's directorial division in equal parts between professionally training students to become filmmakers for feature films, documentaries and newsreels, and educational films (*uchebnaia fil'ma*).[97]

He invited an old friend from graduate school, V. Vladimirskii, a vetted Party journalist and regional newspaper editor, to give lectures about the theory and history of the Bolshevik press to students studying to become documentary film cameramen and filmmakers. Lebedev personally conducted introductory lectures about "film journalism" (*kinopublitsistika*) to students studying documentary. Finally, he called on his close colleague, Boltianskii, to help him develop the educational curriculum for newsreel and documentary at VGIK. He invited Boltianskii to read lectures and showed clips about the history of documentary and newsreel from pre-Revolutionary Russia to the Soviet period.[98]

Lebedev's reorientation of VGIK towards an expansion and professionalization of documentary and newsreel film education bore impressive results. The year 1935 saw a surge of students graduating from VGIK who went on to become documentary film and newsreel cameramen. A total of eighty-five students graduated from the faculty in 1935. The newsreel and

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[95] Ibid., 352.
[96] Resolution No. 137 at the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography from September 5, 1934, as reprinted in ibid., 214.
[97] Resolution No. 127 at the Moscow State Institute of Cinematography from August 11, 1934, as reprinted in ibid., 202–04.
[98] Ibid.

scientific-educational film faculty at VGIK, training both future cameramen and directors in the two genres, combined, was now the largest educational section at the institute.[99] And although Lebedev was only in his position for two years, from August 1934 to September 1936,[100] as he would fall victim of the Great Purges, his vision and reorientation of the country's leading film education institution VGIK towards a more professionalized and expanded role for documentary and newsreel film education would continue and expand to regional studios around the country.

Conclusion

The Soviet Union's first leader, Vladimir Lenin had shown a deep interest in the potential of documentary and newsreel to serve as a weapon of the state to educate, mobilize, and inform the public. Yet, Soviet documentary's expansion and professionalization in the Soviet Union would take time and only became a reality when the right set of circumstances at home and abroad provided the opening for Soviet leaders and film administrators together with film experts to reconfigure Soviet documentary cinema away from a small and semi-private enterprise into a mass state-run industry.

Domestically, Stalin and his colleagues embarked on the rapid reconfiguration of Soviet society, which lead to both achievements and severe setbacks that the Soviet leadership wanted to quickly bring attention to or deflect attention from both at home and abroad. The Soviet leadership saw the epoch as historic and wanted a record of it on film for domestic and international audiences. Meanwhile, the international situation became increasingly threatening to the Soviet

[99] Head of the department for special types of films Grigorii Boltianskii (Zaveduiushchii kafedroi spetsvidov fil'mov Grigorii Boltianskii), "The Department of Documentary and Educational Films" ("Kafedra khroniki i uchebnykh fil'mov"), *Kino-gazeta*, July 4, 1935, as reprinted in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' II (1935–1945)*, 22–23.
[100] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' II (1935–1945)*, 336.

leadership, as Germany became National Socialist and the United States fell into a depression. The Soviet leadership predicted a world war in which the Soviet Union would emerge triumphant.

The Party's overall agenda to reconstruct Soviet society also aimed at taking Soviet cinema out of private hands and placing it under government control in order to create a weapon of mass state propaganda capable of reaching millions at home and abroad. This meant wanting both a mass feature filmmaking industry and an expanded documentary and newsreel industry.

A small group of dedicated individuals—Esfir' Shub, Grigroii Boltianskii, Nikolai Lebedev, and others—interested in the potential of documentary and newsreel to become a weapon of state propaganda seized on the Party's overall vision of a Soviet cinema capable of reaching millions and on the quickly changing circumstances to promote documentary and newsreel.

They saw documentary and newsreel as the preferred cinematic form for the Soviet Union, one that would replace feature. Pushing for an expanded role for documentary and newsreel, they also wanted to propel their own careers. And though the film experts did not achieve their overarching goal of ridding the Soviet Union of feature filmmaking production, they did play an important role in laying the groundwork for an expanded documentary filmmaking industry to emerge. They showed the Party the power of properly run state archives that could preserve historically important documentary footage and films for future generations. They reoriented the country's most important educational institution (VGIK) towards professionally training and expanding the number of students studying to work in documentary and newsreel. In doing so, they provided the Soviet regime with a growing number of committed and trained cameramen and filmmakers that it would cultivate "to go the distance" and ensure the production of documentary footage for the regime, the focus of my next chapter.

Chapter Two: Stalin and His Young Documentary Film Cameramen and Filmmakers: An Interdependent Relationship and Initiative from Below, 1934–41

Introduction

In November 1935 Stalin announced to film students graduating from VGIK, their education was only the first step in "testing their mettle." Their real "tempering" would take place on the job, when facing struggles and challenges that they would have to find ways to overcome. "Remember comrades that only those cadres are worthy, who are not afraid of challenges, and on the contrary face the challenges in order to overcome and liquidate them. Only in a struggle with challenges do real cadres emerge."[1] Indeed, as I will show, in a society facing constant shortages, red tape, over-centralization, bureaucracy, inefficiency, and poor indigenous technology, the Soviet regime relied on professionally trained documentary filmmakers and cameramen to navigate the deficiencies of the Stalinist system, provide input, and "go the distance" to ensure that the production of documentary footage and films was not derailed.

From 1935 until the Nazi invasion of the USSR, VGIK and the country's regional studios churned out hundreds of young professionally trained documentary cameramen and filmmakers to work in the country's expanding documentary filmmaking industry. In most cases, they were the first generation from their background to be given unprecedented opportunities to rise up in the Stalinist system. Trained by an older generation who wanted to fulfill its vision of a mass Soviet documentary that could reach millions across the world, they became instrumental to the production of Stalinist newsreel and documentary film footage.

Throughout the 1930s, they came up with ingenious solutions to the challenges and circumstances they and the Soviet documentary filmmaking industry faced. For example, they

[1] Nikolai Lebedev, "Cadres are Expanding" ("Kadry rastut"), *Kino-gazeta*, November 6, 1935, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 41–42.

went to great lengths, sometime risky and even dangerous behavior to produce footage; they learned to fix cameras in the field instead of sending them to official repair shops; and they moved from working in feature to documentary without official permission; they provided critical feedback and ideas to the Soviet leaders and film administrators the kind of resources and technology that would best ensure the production of sufficient quality and volumes of newsreel and documentary footage.

Film administrators involved in documentary and newsreel for their part showered current and future cameramen and filmmakers with special attention, privileges, and unprecedented careers. Even before their careers began, the Party made known to its young students learning to become documentarians they were involved in a highly important and sensitive endeavor. They were to record and bear witness to the "great epoch" the country and the world were living through, and they were provided sensitive information about foreign and Soviet documentary filmmaking capabilities and access to Western technology and ideas.

Soviet leaders and film administrators, also tolerated many of the cameramen's and filmmakers' risky and dangerous practices—so long as the result was copious quantities of raw footage that could be turned into newsreels and full-length documentaries. They also publicized documentary cameramen's' and filmmakers' efforts in the Soviet press, turning them into household names. Film administrators and Party leaders directly and indirectly also provided the country's young cameramen and filmmakers working in the documentary and newsreel unprecedented opportunities to shoot up the Soviet ladder in terms of their personal and professional development, moving quickly from student, to graduate, to assistant, to full-time cameraman, to filmmaker. During the Great Purges of 1936–38, even as fear spread within the country's documentary filmmaking industry, most Soviet documentary cameramen and

filmmakers were spared, even as the administrative personnel working in Soviet documentary and their bosses were targeted.

I suggest that a kind of mutually interdependent relationship developed between Party leaders and film administrators on the one hand and the new generation of young documentary cameramen and filmmakers on the other. Moscow encouraged its young film cadres to see themselves as privileged and as having a special relationship of interdependence with film administrators and the Party leadership. Their special status provided them the confidence and the tacit permission to navigate the deficiencies of Soviet society as they saw fit and to openly provide their own ideas and approaches to the party and film administrators to ensure the production of newsreels and documentaries and to improve their line of work.[2] Young documentary filmmakers and newsreel cameramen, such as Roman Karmen, boldly and openly made it known to the Party that the country was ill-prepared to film an all-out war due to poor Soviet camera technology. One of the key ideas he and others proposed was that the Soviet Union officially adopt the use of American hand-held cameras instead of relying on clunky and inefficient Soviet cameras or used foreign models. And when war finally did break out, film administrators and the Party did not forget the advice Karmen and other young cameramen and filmmakers provided on the eve of the war.

In other words, the Soviet Union's young documentary filmmakers and cameramen who had graduated from VGIK and went on to work in the country's documentary and newsreel industry were not simply blind yes men who strictly followed and implemented orders from on high. I suggest film administrators and Party leaders needed young cadres who possessed the

[2] My findings concur with those of Konecny. Konecny notes that for students studying at the country's higher educational institutions, "exposure to the underbelly of Soviet life provided a hardening experience for apprentices, but it also accentuated an elitist attitude fostered by a recognition of their own privileged status" (Ibid., 12–13).

confidence and ability to take the initiative from below so that Stalinist documentary could operate and succeed.

My findings coincide with recent scholarship by Francine Hirsch, Stephen Kotkin, and Peter Konecny, among others, who go beyond the "totalitarian" and "revisionist" models of Stalinism to show how the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin relied on agency from cadres, that is, how it was "an interactive" and "participatory process."[3] In fact, we now know Stalinism was even built and sustained by unsanctioned black-market practices.[4]

By describing and analyzing the relationships and practices cultivated by the Party and film administrators with its young documentary film cadres, I further the scholarship to show how privilege, initiative, fear, and interdependence intersected and mutually reinforced one another and helped in the development and operation of Stalinist documentary filmmaking efforts in the 1930s. The Soviet government and film administrators carefully and intentionally cultivated a special relationship with young documentary film cadres and provided them immense privileges.[5] They for their part came up with their own ideas and solutions to problems and provided feedback to the Party and film administrators as to how to improve their profession.

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[3] For a few excellent treatments, see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 5; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 279; and Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*.

[4] Here, I am very much in agreement with Kotkin's that non-state-market, or unofficial black market, activities not only existed but were very "useful," and "not merely in permitting a means of survival for people otherwise unable to get by" (*Magnetic Mountain*, 240). In fact, the state was the "the most energetic unauthorized 'marketeer' of all" according to Kotkin (ibid., 242).

[5] Sheila Fitzpatrick mentions in her conclusion to *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) that sometimes risk-taking was necessary in a country of bureaucracy and shortages to keep things going (221–22). Looking at the country's young generation of documentary film cameramen and filmmakers, risk-taking and initiative were fundamental to their work in building and sustaining the production of newsreel and documentary footage. I also discuss why Soviet authorities not only tolerated initiative from below but provided young cameramen and filmmakers in documentary with a special status and relationship to the Party and to film administrators: to ensure that a vast official documentary record of the epoch could be produced.

Their special relationship of interdependency with the state went beyond a patron and client relationship[6] or one of a welfare state.[7] The Soviet state was "courting and coaxing and bribing" them because professionally trained cadres were "needed"[8] to help build and sustain Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts. Young cadres recognized their and their profession's importance and special status and adopted bold approaches and spoke their minds not merely to survive, as a challenge, or to "accommodate the regime,"[9] but to ensure their own and their profession's success.[10]

The Privileged Education of Soviet Documentary Filmmakers and Cameramen

Starting in 1934, the All-State Cinema Institute for Cinematography (VGIK) and those studying at regional studios began expanding the professional recruitment and training of students to become documentary filmmakers and cameramen for the Soviet government.[11] The manner in which these students were recruited, trained, treated, and employed was a major reason that led them towards becoming an extremely tight-knit, privileged, vetted, and hard-working cohort, and one that became dedicated to ensuring the success of their profession.

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[6] Ibid., 109–14.
[7] See Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, 23.
[8] A quote taken from a Soviet émigré journal as cited in Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 96. Fitzpatrick also describes how privilege worked in the 1930s in Stalin's Soviet Union.
[9] See Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*, 10.
[10] In contrast to Konecny, who identifies both "deserters" and "builders" within the Soviet university system of Leningrad in the 1930s, I view Stalin's young generation of professionally trained documentary and newsreel cameramen and filmmakers mostly as "builders." See Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*, 258–65. My findings for Stalinist documentary also mirror what I have found to be the case for Stalin's greatest feature filmmakers following the Great Terror. See Raiklin, "Soviet Cinema in the Wake of the Terror."
[11] In contrast, by this time, the professional education and training of directors, actors, and feature cameramen was languishing in the Soviet Union. The number of students studying to become directors, actors, and feature cameramen had dropped sharply by the mid-1930s and would not recover. Moreover, there were few career opportunities for the graduates who wanted to go into feature by the mid-1930s. For an excellent treatment of this phenomenon, see Miller, *Soviet Cinema*, 139–53.

The cohort of students was very young. This I suggest made them highly impressionable. Most students came to study at VGIK right after graduating high school. So they could be as young as 16 years of age upon enrollment in 1934. Most were born just before the Bolshevik seizure of power. The youngest student to begin studying in 1941 would have been born in the mid-1920s.

Most had received a Soviet primary education, first in the 1920s during the NEP, as children, and then as teenagers during the Stalin period. They had been raised in a society that had just experienced a civil war and the constant shortages, institutional and personnel changes, and zig-zag educational practices of the NEP and then the Stalinist revolution. The two constants of the time were the Bolsheviks and shortages. They became adept, as we shall see, at navigating both.

Many were the first generation from their respective backgrounds and in their families to gain an education under the Stalinist educational system. The largest segment of students at VGIK studying documentary were of peasant or worker stock from the country's rural and new industrial areas. This should not be a surprise, nor was it simply by chance. It was a conscious government policy in cinema to recruit new cadres from peasant and worker backgrounds.

As early as January of 1929, the Party Central Committee had decreed that in order to strengthen cinema cadres, schools had to "raise the worker and peasant element to 75%."[12] It is also worth noting that a large number of students who entered to study in the cameraman faculty at VGIK were non-Russian. Using their last names as a rough guide for classification many were of Jewish descent, followed by Georgians, Armenians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians.[13] Entering

[12] "Strengthening the Cadres of Cinema Workers" ("Ukrepit' kadry rabotnikov kino"), *Pravda*, February 3 1929, 4, as reprinted in Taylor and Christie, *The Film Factory*, 254.
[13] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K Istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 367–68 and ibid., *K Istorii VGIKa, Chast' II (1935–1945)*, 336–40.

into the country's film industry to become documentary cameramen or filmmakers, all had much to gain and much to prove to themselves, their families, and their superiors.

A culture of masculinity and brotherhood emerged in the 1930s in the documentary filmmaking profession in the Soviet Union. This further cemented them into an identifiable group and a tight knit comradery amongst them. Theirs was a man's world. Few women studied to become documentary film cameramen or filmmakers. One reason for this was that the documentary cameraman profession was seen by film administrators and filmmakers alike as a tough physical job, often times dangerous—one had to be out in the elements, endure heavy lifting, constant moving, and travelling. There was also, in all likelihood, discrimination coming from the men in a masculine-dominated profession against women entering the field. One cameraman put it this way in 1932: "The majority of operators simply refuse to take on female assistants, providing as their motivation that 'a woman is weak, she'll fall with the camera.'"[14]

The young men being admitted to study to become documentary cameramen and filmmakers were gifted individuals. The entrance qualifications for VGIK were highly competitive. By 1940, in order to be admitted to the cameraman faculty (*operatorskii fakul'tet*) at VGIK, a prospective student had to submit a portfolio of photographs as well as drawings and be judged by faculty.[15]

They became a tight knit cohort also because they studied together under the same instructors, took the same classes, and were subjected to the same curriculum with heavy indoctrination with Soviet ideology for a period of four years. All sat in on ideological courses such as "Foundations of Marxism-Leninism" for four hours per week in their first three semesters

[14] O. Kon, "An Errand Boy" ("Mal'chik na pobegushkakh"), *Kino*, September 6, 1932, as cited in Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 173.
[15] Komitet po delam kinematografii pri SNK SSSR: Upravlenie uchebnymi zavedeniiami, *Uchebnye zavedeniia kinematografii: Spravochnik* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1940), 7.

of study, "Political Economy" for four hours per week for two semesters, and "Dialectical and historical materialism" for four hours per week during semesters six and seven. Even an innocuous sounding lecture such as "Directing and the Montage of Newsreel Films" offered to students in their third and fourth years of schooling carried with it an enormous amount of ideological content by drawing a sharp distinction between Soviet newsreel and its Western counterpart.[16]

Professors inculcated students with the idea of the seminal importance of their profession and the distinction between their line of work and those working for the West. Courses presented them and their line of work as being a part of a historic epoch, authentic, and on the right side of history. Classes taught cameramen to see themselves at the forefront of the ideological war against capitalism. They were taught that the Western press (and Western newsreel) strove for a "pseudo-objectivism," whereas, in fact, the bourgeois press controlled by the capitalist class in the West utilized documentary and newsreel "to stupefy the masses."[17] The Western newsreel was also shown to be a propaganda tool used by the capitalists to foment war against progressive elements around the world and within the capitalist societies, and to promote the idea of an imperialist war aimed at toppling the Bolsheviks and other likeminded communist and socialist groups. The Bolshevik press and newsreel, they were taught, was the more authentic, honest, progressive, and ethical in terms of its content when compared with its Western counterpart.[18]

They were provided financial incentives during their education—unheard of for ordinary strata of the population employed in everyday jobs. They received stipends that rivaled average full-time worker salaries, anywhere from 130 to 200 rubles per month, depending on their year in the program.[19]

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[16] Ibid., 25–27.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid., 3.

Finally, the students were taught foreign languages, to have an international outlook, and to be privy to sensitive information. They were taught to learn foreign languages and to have a knowledge of world cinema, information few in the Soviet Union possessed at the time.[20] Students attended a foreign language lecture (*inostrannyi izayk*) for two hours per week for six of their eight semesters. They were also required to take a course entitled, "The History of Film" ("Istoriia kino") for two semesters in their fifth and sixth years, for approximately two hours per week. The course focused on the history of foreign cinema, where students screened and discussed foreign documentaries, newsreels, and features.[21] Knowledge of foreign languages and other countries' capabilities, ideas, know-how, and technology must have also cemented them further as a group. They realized they were trusted by the regime with sensitive information about the capitalist world that the average Soviet citizen did not have.

Exciting Opportunities and Perks for Soviet Documentary Filmmakers and Cameramen

By the mid-1930s, many graduates who had studied documentary filmmaking were quickly achieving privileged careers in the country's expanding documentary filmmaking industry. As early as 1931, Vladislav Mikosha recalled in his memoir the excitement he felt at the tender age of twenty-one when, still a student studying at VGIK, he was chosen to be assistant cameraman to Sergei Semenov and instructed to film Soviet leaders during the May Day celebrations at Red Square, the opportunity of a lifetime.[22] He worked with a French-made stationary camera, the Debrie, which Mikosha held in high esteem. He was placed on top of the Lenin Mausoleum with Semenov. And when Stalin appeared with Molotov and Voroshilov, Mikosha was transfixed and

[20] Ibid., 25–27.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Vladislav Mikosha, *Ia ostnavlivaiu vremia* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2005), 60–62.

even forgot to change the cassette for the camera when it ran out of film. In just several months, Mikosha had gone from being a student to helping one of the country's top newsreel cameramen to film one of the most important communist holidays, and to being up close with the country's top leaders and its most important leader. In another year, he himself would become a full-time cameraman with his own assistant, working with a US-made camera. Mikosha was ecstatic to be working with such a camera, which was the only one of its kind in the Soviet Union, according to him.[23]

Mikosha was not alone. Other examples include R. Gikov, graduating from GIK in 1929, and R. Karmen and M. Slutskii, graduating in 1932, who began shooting footage as full-fledged cameramen for the documentary film *Moscow* (*Moskva*).[24] D. Surenskii, a graduate from GIK from 1930, quickly landed a job as cameraman for Dziga Vertov's last major documentary film project, "*Three Songs of Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Lenine*) produced in 1934."[25]

Routinely provided with large financial outlays, foreign film technology, and access to foreign countries for special film projects, must have further instilled a sense of privilege amongst Soviet documentary and newsreel cameramen and filmmakers and must have given them a sense of the great importance attributed by Soviet leaders and film administrators to them and their work. The foreign film cameras used by Soviet cameramen and filmmakers included the stationary 35-mm French Debrie, American hand-held Eyemo, German hand-held Kinamo, and German hand-held Askaniia. Soviet documentary and newsreel cameramen and filmmakers working on important projects typically also used German Agfa and American Kodak film stock.

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[23] Ibid., 64–65.
[24] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 18. No additional publication information is available for the film.
[25] Ibid., 20.

For instance, *Soiuzkinokhronika* made sure Roman Karmen and Boris Makaseev were sent to Spain in 1936 with Kodak Super X film stock and two American Eyemo cameras in order to produce reliably high-quality footage for a project deemed of utmost importance by the Party.[26] The camera crew was also provided with a very large sum of money ($5,000) by the Political Bureau of the Central Committee to ensure the completion of their special assignment.[27] By November of 1936, the Council had resolved to provide Karmen and Makaseev an additional $10,000 for the purchase of Western film stock in France.[28] With such large sums of money, the film crews did not need to economize as much on film stock, as was often the case with cameramen who filmed with Soviet film stock in the Soviet Union. In just under nine months, the film crew in Spain had shot over 40,000 meters of film footage for the project using expensive Super X Kodak film stock. In order to develop the film footage, the camera crew periodically travelled to Paris.[29]

The country's documentary film cameramen and filmmakers entered a privileged world that was also much greater than that of solely filming footage for documentaries and newsreels. They often worked as journalists, photographers, and writer: publishing articles, keeping a diary, and taking photos to be published by Soviet national newspapers, broadcast via radio reports, and turned into books and magazine articles.[30] Many Soviet documentary filmmakers and cameramen had the opportunity to work alongside and become close friends with the country's most prominent radio broadcasters, journalists, and photographers. They must have recognized they were part of a

[26] Boris Makaseev, *V revoliutsionnoi Ispanii* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1938), 28.
[27] Resolution of the Politburo of the Communist Party "About the Work Trip of the Cameramen Sent to Spain," August 17, 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 980, l. 44, as cited in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii Kinoteatr,* 363.
[28] Instructions of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR "Issuing an Additional 10,000 US Dollars for the Purchase in France of Film Stock for the Cameramen R. Karmen, B. Makaseev, Working in Spain," November 19, 1936, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 4, d. 25, l. 6, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 433.
[29] N. Kolin, ed., *Zapiski kinooperatorov* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1938), 123.
[30] Mikosha, *Ia ostnavlivaiu vremia*, 84–85.

much wider Soviet elite responsible for an important and historic mission: to record, transmit, and be the embodiment of an historic epoch.

An excellent example of this is Mikosha, who recorded for the Soviet Union and the world the harrowing events of the Soviet ship, the Cheliuskin, in winter of 1933–34, which—together with its crew—was trapped in an ice flow in the Bering Strait. Mikosha and his colleagues systematically recorded the stories of the crew, kept diaries, shot photos with a Leica camera, and filmed the events with a film camera for future films and newsreels. The result of their hard work was that the episode of the Cheliuskin would become known all over the Soviet Union and the world as an example of the heroism and will of the Soviet people in the face of enormous odds. The footage shot by Mikosha and his colleagues was then used to produce one of the most well-known documentary films of the 1930s, *Cheliuskin*, released in the summer of 1934.[31]

Being employed by the Soviet government, documentary cameramen and filmmakers were provided access to special government benefits such as excellent apartments, places of rest, and work clubs. Mikosha recalled how their apartments became places of spending time together, as it became common for cameramen to invite one another for dinners. The workers' club, *Rabis*, was important as a place to relax together, as were the volleyball courts of the Central Park of Culture and Relaxation (TsPKiO) and the "Hermitage" gardens. These state-sponsored areas for living, working, and relaxing further cemented them as a group, as they became close friends and colleagues.[32]

A Media Campaign to Publicize Documentary Cameramen and Filmmakers and Their Line of Work

[31] Ibid., 105–06.
[32] Ibid., 63–64.

Meanwhile, a media campaign was in full-swing by the mid-1930s publicizing the country's achievements with documentary and newsreel and the heroism of the country's young cameramen and filmmakers working in documentary. Radio programs, books, newspaper and magazine articles, exhibits, and newsreels and films appeared publicizing the newest Soviet newsreels and documentaries and detailing the lives and the work of Soviet documentary filmmakers and cameramen for both domestic and foreign consumption. The advertising blitz portrayed a documentary filmmaker's and cameraman's profession as important, historic, epic, dangerous, and adventurous. The country's documentary filmmakers and cameramen directly took part in the process by writing articles, chapters, works, and speaking at public talks about their profession, their work, and their interests. A number of books were published written about and by Soviet documentarians, complete with illustrations, and written in travelogue and diary formats.[33]

Building a heroic image around the newsreel and documentary profession and its individuals was not new in the Soviet Union. The tradition started as far back as the 1920s with books published by documentary cameramen and filmmakers about their craft. [34] Vertov as we know heavily marketed himself, his work, and his movement, the *Kinoglaz,* in newspapers and in his in own newsreels and films, sometimes even pointing the camera at himself.[35] Now, in the

[33] See, for example, such works as V. A. Shneiderov, *Kinoapparat na Tian'-Shane* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1932) targeting youth audiences specifically; id., *Vosem' Kinoputeshestvii* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1937); Kolin, *Zapiski kinooperatorov*; and Makaseev, *V revoliutsionnoi Ispanii,* to name just a few. See also, such articles in *Sovetskoe kino* such as Nikolai Vlakhirev, "With a Camera through the Caucasian Mountains" ("S kinoapparatom cherez Kavkaskie gory"), *Sovetskoe kino* 10 (October 1934): 60–63; Roman Katsman, "Cheliuskin," *Sovetskoe kino* 8 (September 1934): 35–46; id., "The Documentary and Newsreel People" ("Liudi kinokhroniki"), *Sovetskoe kino* 11 (December 1934): 142–50: and the article by P. Atasheva, "Spanish land" ("Ispanskaia zemlia"), *Iskusstvo kino* 1 (January 1938): 60–62.

[34] See, also, Georgii Blium, *S kino-apparatom v vozdukhe* (Moscow: Kinopechat', 1926) and V. A. Shneiderov, *Na vysotakh mira: Dnevnik kino-ekspeditsii* (Moscow: Teakinopechat', 1929).

[35] See, Elizabeth Papazian, *Manufacturing Truth: The Documentary Moment in Early Soviet Culture* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 69-124.

1930s, an entire new generation of professionally trained Soviet newsreel and documentary film cameramen and filmmakers, its profession, and the different types of footage and works being produced were being glorified with heroic and romantic messages.

As official narrators and story-tellers, they publicized not only of their profession but their importance to the epoch they had witnessed and recorded on film. The opportunity allowed them to inscribe themselves into the Stalinist project. They became part of what I call an official living memory of the Stalinist epoch. It also allowed them to become household names in the Soviet Union along with Soviet feature actors and filmmakers. Finally, the heroic and adventurous public image around the country's cameramen that emerged must have further cemented their understanding of themselves as a special cohort highly valuable to the regime.

As early as 1931, during the First Five-Year Plan, a media campaign had begun with A. Terskoi publishing the book, *With a Film Camera across the USSR* (*S kinoapparatom po SSSR*). Terskoi's work and others that came afterwards in the 1930s buzzed with energy, drama, and enthusiasm, showing cameramen working in exotic locations and in precarious positions, recording for posterity the march toward the building of communism in the Soviet Union and the looming clouds of conflict abroad. The authors of the books presented a heroic and adventurous image of the cameraman working under difficult conditions around the Soviet Union and the world yet managing to successfully overcome those challenges to produce moving footage for audiences.[36]

Young documentary cameramen and filmmakers typically gave public talks, such as those by Roman Karmen, by the mid-1930s. Karmen, who worked under difficult field conditions shooting conflicts and wars abroad in Spain and China, often gave talks both for the public and for

[36] As cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 135. The book was published as A. Terskoi, *S kinoapparatom po SSSR* (Moscow; Leningrad: Molodaia gvardiia, 1931).

young Soviet cameramen after returning from abroad. Arriving from China in October of 1939, having shot footage of the Japanese war and occupation of Manchuria for almost a year, Karmen held several talks at the Moscow[37] and Leningrad Houses of Cinema with young Soviet documentary filmmakers and cameramen speaking about how to film and work in conflict zones. He also gave a presentation at the Polytechnical Museum in Moscow, where his talk was advertised with the catchy title, "With a Film Camera across China." Karmen spoke about the challenges and excitement of working in China and Spain.[38]

The publicity must have stirred the excitement of ordinary people as well as Soviet adolescents and potential students of documentary filmmaking, presenting them with tantalizing tales and adventures of heroic cameramen and documentary filmmakers and their work. The renowned and decorated cameraman Semen Shkol'nikov, who would go on to shoot footage for the well-known documentary film *Mannerheim Line* and produce thousands of meters of footage during the Great Patriotic War, recalled in his memoir how, as a teenager in the 1930s, he had the opportunity to see and hear a famous Soviet cameraman speak at a gathering of friends of Soviet cinema. The cameraman told stories about filming in far-away places, working in ice and desert conditions, about mountain excursions with geologic expeditions, and about filming at sea. Shkol'nikov was captivated by the cameraman and his stories: "I could not tear away from him my eyes, full of enchantment, and listened to him holding my breath." In the case of Shkol'nikov, it was then that he began thinking seriously about his future career and the possibility of trying to become a cameraman.[39] There must have been thousands of adolescents like Shkol'nikov in the

[37] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 634.
[38] Ibid., 681.
[39] Semen Semonovich Shkol'nikov, *V Ob'ektive—Voina* (Moscow: Voenizdat, 1979), 16.

Soviet Union who were now enthralled by the excitement and importance of the life and work of Soviet documentary and newsreel cameramen.

Fear and Stalin's Documentary Filmmakers and Cameramen, 1936–38

The waves of terror and fear that had become so routine for Soviet society and swept away so many lives in the 1930s came to a culmination between 1936 and 1938. The year 1936 saw a series of events take place outside and within the Soviet Union that would greatly impact the Soviet leadership's views of the world. On the international stage, in March, Hitler sent troops into the demilitarized zone of the Rhineland in violation of the Versailles Treaty. Also, in 1936, Nazi Germany, Japan, and Italy signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. Spain descended into Civil War, with Germany and the Soviet Union becoming involved as a proxy war. In Abyssinia, the Italian government waged a war of colonization.[40]

Soviet leaders, fomenting the fear of imagined enemies from without and within, unleashed a campaign of terror ordering the arrest, trial, murder, and/or exile of innocent millions and opponents from a large swath of Soviet society.[41] The terror and purges impacted cinema, and documentary and newsreel specifically. The manner in which the purges took place in Soviet documentary though mirrored the feature filmmaking industry where it focused predominantly on film administrators, older cadres, and institutional shake-ups.[42] In the documentary filmmaking industry, the Soviet regime turned to a combination of greater centralization, the purging of administrative cadres and older cadres, further reliance on young cadres, and spreading fear

[40] Orlow, *A History of Modern Germany*, 189-191.
[41] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 103-111.
[42] For an excellent treatment of the effects of the purges on Soviet feature filmmakers, film administrators, and institutions, see Jamie Miller, "The Purges of Soviet Cinema, 1929–1938," *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2007): 5–26.

amongst its young cadres. I will focus on the latter three. This meant that, for the most part, Stalin's young cadres in documentary and newsreel were left alone. This is revealing in that it shows the extent to which Soviet authorities privileged its young film cadres and did not want to derail the production of documentary films, newsreels, and footage.

By resolution of the Council of People's Commissars, new faculty were invited to lecture and teach at VGIK alongside older loyal faculty. Older loyal faculty training students included A. Golovnia (faculty head and professor), Makaseev (senior lecturer), A. Levitskii (senior lecturer), N. Naumov (senior lecturer), A. Gal'perin (senior lecturer), Ia. Tolchan (senior lecturer), N. Anoshchenko (professor), Boltianskii (lecturer), M. Oshurkov (lecturer), K. Vents-Eisler (lecturer), and I. Sharenkov (lecturer).[43] The Party then went after the older generation of documentary filmmakers and cameramen. The esteemed documentary film director Bliokh, who had worked in film since the Bolshevik Revolution, was arrested.[44]

Even loyal film administrators who had been critical of the rise of documentary and newsreel in the Soviet Union also now became targets of the purges. Lebedev was removed from his post at VGIK in September 1936 and replaced by M. Segal' who was also removed in October of 1937. Shumiatskii, the head of the country's filmmaking industry was demoted in January 1936 to Deputy Chairman and subjected to intense criticism for his failure to increase Soviet cinema output and break the logjam of Soviet film studios taking so long to produce feature films.[45] Shumiatskii was removed from his position altogether in February 1936, arrested, and finally

[43] Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' II (1935–1945)*, 106.
[44] See Mikosha, *Ia ostanavlivaiu vremia*, 124.
[45] G. Ermolaev, "What is Stymying the Development of Soviet Cinema" ("Shto tormozit razvitie sovetskogo kino"), *Pravda*, January 9, 1938, 4, as cited in Taylor and Christie, *The Film Factory*, 386–87; and Memorandum of the chief of cultural-enlightenment work of the Central Committee A. Shcherbakov to Stalin, A. Andreev, and I. Ezhov about the results of the work of the Chief Directorate of the Film and Photo Industry in 1935 and plans for 1936, no later than March 2, 1936, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 949, l. 109–17, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 306–11.

executed. With the appointment of Semen Dukel'skii from the NKVD (secret police), feature filmmaking, which had already been languishing in output and experiencing a decrease in variety, now had no chance of recovering. Dukel'skii imposed greater centralization and control over the country's feature filmmakers and feature filmmaking studios, which it even more difficult to produce a feature film in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, feature filmmakers, actors, and script writers were targeted in the purges.[46]

In the meantime, Europe was moving closer to war. Hitler annexed Austria in March 1938. Stalin and the Party leadership grew even more concerned of the potential of a war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. The Soviet leadership placed the filmmaking industry under increased state surveillance and control in preparation for war. Over-centralization, purges, and terror could have detrimentally impacted the country's documentary filmmakers and cameramen if they were targeted and thereby derailed Soviet documentary and newsreel efforts. Yet, for the most part, the country's young generation of documentary cameramen and filmmakers were not targeted in the purges. In fact, during the terror and purges of 1936–38, the number of graduates at VGIK and regional studios going on to be documentary filmmakers and cameramen continued to climb. And the purges, I have found, provided Stalin's young graduates with the opportunity to replace their former teachers and take positions of power within the documentary filmmaking.[47]

This is not to say that the Party's wave of terror did not instill fear and discipline amongst its young generation of film cadres. Soviet documentary filmmakers and cameramen were aware from the flood of official reports from the Soviet press and conversation amongst themselves and

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[46] Scholars have written about a crisis in Soviet feature filmmaking by this time. For a treatment of what that crisis looked like from the point of view of Soviet feature filmmakers and their futile proposals to resolve the crisis from 1939–41, see my article, Raiklin, "Soviet Cinema in the Wake of the Terror." For an excellent treatment of the unresolved script crisis and continued artisanal nature of Soviet feature filmmaking production practices throughout the 1930s see Belodubrovskaia, *Not According to Plan*.

[47] For a personal narrative of how the purges swept through the country's film institute in 1930, see Mikosha, *Ia ostanavlivaiu vremia*, 54–58.

Soviet citizens that spies, traitors, and saboteurs abounded in Soviet society and that they were being unmasked and tried by the Soviet regime. The Stalinist regime enlisted its young documentary filmmakers and cameramen to record on film the trials of the so-called spies, traitors, and saboteurs.[48]

In August of 1937, the regime also targeted a small group of young cameramen to stoke fear amongst their cohort. The cameraman Boris Tseitlin was accused by the Party, along with a group of film workers and leaders at the Moscow Documentary Film Studio, of encouraging a "cult of personality" around himself for professional and personal gain. Tseitlin and his accomplices were accused of receiving over-large sums of money in the form of bonuses, work-related privileges, and "systematically taking advantage of female minors."[49] It was a high-profile court process that appeared in the press, with the head of the investigative section of the procuracy of the USSR, L. R. Sheinin, becoming personally involved. The cameramen A. Krichevskii and M. Virta-Auerbakh, as well as Tseitlin were all tried, found guilty, and imprisoned.[50] The case acted as a public warning by the Party to its young documentary cameramen and filmmakers and film administrators that to take advantage of their privileged status for immoral gain rather than to help the Stalinist project would not be tolerated.

The Payoff: Stalin's Documentary Film Cameramen and Filmmakers Go the Distance to Produce Footage and Films, 1934–39

Showered with privilege, importance, and instilled with fear, the foundations of what I call a relationship of mutual interdependence was laid. Soviet documentary film cameramen and

[48] RGAKFD, 4140, *Prigovor suda – prigovor naroda*, 1938.
[49] N. Kruzhkov, "The personal life of Boris Tseitlin" ("Lichnaia zhizn' Borisa Tseitlina"), *Pravda*, August 15, 1937, 3.
[50] "Verdict for the case of Tseitlin and others" ("Prigovor po delu Tseitlina i dr."), *Pravda*, October 23, 1937, 6.

filmmakers reciprocated by finding all manner of home-grown methods to ensure the production of documentary footage for the Soviet regime despite the many challenges to doing so. The challenges facing the industry were many as I discussed in my first chapter. Young Soviet documentary film cameramen and filmmakers entered a profession that continued to be riddled with shortages of reliable indigenous technology, over-centralization, bureaucracy, and inefficiency.

Though there was an official state-administered placement, or *raspredelenie*, system in place for VGIK graduates, by the mid-1930s some students graduating from a variety of filmmaking disciplines went against the placement system and chose to work for Soviet newsreel and documentary. There were a number of incentives to do so. First, feature filmmaking was hiring few new cadres starting by the mid-1930s. Moreover, studying to become a film engineer, although a steady job was not as exciting of a career as becoming a documentary filmmaker or cameraman. Some young film graduates "voted with their feet" in favor of documentary and newsreel.[51] It was a potentially a risky endeavor, to say the least—and cameramen knew this to be the case. The official press carried articles shedding light on the practice and calling on cadres to stop such activities.[52]

However, the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs was having difficulty tracking individuals once they were sent off with an official note stating their employment capacity and location. "Whether one or another [young graduate] actually reached the intended place of work, how s/he was welcomed there, or if s/he was in need of assistance, the cadres sector does not know." The problem was so acute that the cadres sector talked about "chaos hanging over" (*tsarit*

[51] See Mikosha, *Ia ostanavlivaiu vremia*, 63.
[52] K. Svetlanin, "How Employment Distribution is Taking Place amongst the Cadres of Young Specialists" ("Kak raspredeliaiutsia kadry molodykh spetsialistov"), *Kino Moskvy*, October 5, 1939, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 139–40.

besporiadok) the official placement process, in which the cadres sector was not aware of "where its young specialists were ending up, where some refused to travel to their official places of work chosen for them, and even where some attempted to dictate their own terms of work to film organizations, or simply quit their employment altogether once they had begun work. The cadres sector cited an example of a group of graduates from the cameraman faculty of VGIK having such "unhealthy attitudes" as to openly state that they would be willing to work only in Moscow or Leningrad, not in the country's regional studios. The cadres sector pointed to the graduates' so-called poor arguments to make their case such as, "my wife lives in Moscow," or, "I have a room in Moscow."[53]

As early as 1931, when the future well-known documentary film cameraman Mikosha graduated and was officially placed to begin his first job as a feature film cameraman, he realized that feature was not where he wanted to be. Yet, according to Mikosha, his first two weeks at the studio were spent with little work, simply "walking the corridors with little to do." Mikosha came up with the idea of approaching the head of newsreel and documentary division at the studio, Viktor Iosilevich, to see if he would transfer him to his division. Iosilevich had two requirements of Mikosha: that he be dedicated to his line of work, and that if the studio found him useful, that he promise to work for the studio for the rest of his life. Mikosha answered that he wanted to be a cameraman because "I very much want to see the world, the land, on which I live." With that, according to Mikosha, he was recruited by Iosilevich.[54]

The example of the cameraman Israel' Gol'dshtein is also very illustrative of the unsanctioned movement of young individuals into documentary. After graduating from VGIK's cameraman faculty in 1939, the young Gol'dshtein was to be placed with the Armenian feature

[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., 58–59.

filmmaking studio. Gol'dshtein, who was from Ukraine, was not interested in working in feature filmmaking in Armenia. He argued before the Deputy Minister for Cadres that he should be placed elsewhere. He lost that battle, as he was still sent to Armenia, where he witnessed first-hand that there were few feature films being produced at the studio and little to no work for him.[55]

When the time came for an official holiday, Gol'dshtein travelled back to his native Ukraine. While in Kiev, he dropped in on his own initiative at the Kiev feature filmmaking studio, at which the famous Aleksandr Dovzhenko was the chief director. He asked administrators at the studio if there was work for him, a cameraman. According to Gol'dshtein, the person he spoke to laughed him off, asking, "Are you serious?" At this point, Gol'dshtein approached the Kiev documentary filmmaking studio in search of work. He asked if he could be hired and introduced himself as a graduate of VGIK. The director of the studio asked if he was a Party member, and Gol'dshtein answered that he was being considered as a candidate member. The director of the studio agreed to take him on and filed his papers to work at the Kiev documentary filmmaking studio.[56] Thus, young graduates who wanted to work in filmmaking continued ended up in documentary and newsreel through their own initiative, the need of film administrators for cadres, and because feature filmmaking administrators who did not have work opportunities for them.

Once employed, Stalin's cameramen and filmmakers working in documentary routinely also turned to their own instincts and initiative about how to film and how to gain access to places, people, and so on outside official instructions. In 1932, a young Mikosha was sent by his documentary filmmaking studio in Moscow on an official assignment to film footage of a cement factory. After filming the factory, Mikosha realized that he could make a grand visual statement

[55] Taken from p. 3 of Israel' Gol'shshtein's unpublished memoir. The draft memoir is part of his personal file, which I was given permission to copy by his nephew, who holds the original documents in Kiev, Ukraine.
[56] Ibid.

of the factory and mine if he were able to film both from the air. However, to do so, Mikosha would need special permission from the studio. Without asking for permission, which would take a lengthy amount of time and might or might not be approved, Mikosha decided to head to a small airport nearby to see if someone might take him up in the air to shoot footage.[57]

He ran into a young student studying at the pilot school who agreed, asking only that Mikosha show his credentials. Mikosha, though, wanted a bit more of local management involved and asked the pilot about this. The young pilot only laughed him off, saying that official permission from his boss was not needed. The pilot took him up in the air for a test flight first, without Mikosha's camera. What happened next as the flight was cut short when the plane caught fire and Mikosha and the pilot had to eject. The fact that a student pilot took the initiative to help a cameraman to shoot footage for which he had no official permission to do so says a great deal about how Mikosha and his colleagues went to great efforts to get the job done for the Soviet government and the help they received along the way.[58]

Some young cameramen put their own lives in danger and even paid with their health and their lives for their risky behavior trying to acquire the most exciting footage possible. Kolia Teplukhin is a case in point. At age 20, he was sent along with Solomon Kogan, to film Soviet military maneuvers in L'vov in 1940 from the air. The plane supplied was a single passenger plane, so the more experienced and older cameraman, Kogan, who was around 26, went up to film alone alongside the pilot. Kogan was able to acquire the kind of footage requested. Teplukhin was to remain on land. However, Teplukhin was able to convince the pilot to take him up in the air also to shoot additional footage. The plane took off and after few maneuvers the pilot realized he could not see Teplukhin in his rearview mirror and he landed the plane. Wanting to film more exciting

[57] Mikosha, *Ia ostanavlivaiu vremia*, 108–12.
[58] Ibid.

footage from different angles Teplukhin had removed his seatbelt harnesses and fell out of the plane as the pilot reached a peak and dove.[59]

Teplukhin's case was not unique. Other cameramen also went to great, often risky, lengths in the 1930s to shoot dramatic and exciting footage, such as holding on to the side-ladder of a moving train and without being strapped when filming. The job of a cameraman, of course, was risky and dangerous as it was, but the insistence by young cameramen to take even greater risks than necessary showed their extreme naivete and eagerness to get the job done for the Stalinist regime. Another reason they took the initiative and risked their lives was that they were often working far from Moscow even as footage had to be produced on schedule. Whether at new industrial sites or in wild areas of Siberia, Ukraine, Central Asia, the Far East, and the Far North or working abroad in such far-away places as the Soviet-Chinese border, Abyssinia, and Spain, they must have realized that to wait for Moscow or film administrators for official instructions for all possible scenarios encountered would take a great deal of time and might or might not be approved. Instead, they routinely took decisions on the ground, without the permission of Moscow.

Another excellent example of such initiative can be found in the cameramen Karmen and Makaseev, who were sent by the Soviet Union in 1936 to Spain to produced footage for newsreels and documentaries about the Spanish Civil War. In his memoir, Makaseev recalls some of the "secret" methods, as he calls them that allowed him, Karmen, and their team to produce and edit an immense amount of footage quickly and contrary to official instructions, which often hindered their work. One set of instructions they did not follow was the requirement to have footage edited in Paris before being sent on to Moscow. Makaseev and Karmen understood that for them to

[59] Ibid., 145–50.

personally go back and forth to a Paris laboratory to edit meant sacrificing precious time and resources they could instead devote to shooting more footage of the Spanish Civil War.[60]

Karmen and Makaseev decided to set up a laboratory for editing and exposing footage right in Spain and to rely on locals to help them. The individuals they chose to work were vetted Communist Party members. They supplied Karmen and Makaseev with a film laboratory which had been jointly run by the Americans and Spanish before the start of the Spanish Civil War. It had the latest American technology, which the cameramen were eager to utilize and produce the best possible footage for Moscow. And the Spanish communist government's Ministry of Enlightenment supplied Soviet cameramen with editing tables that it placed right in their hotel rooms to help speed up the process of editing. This allowed Karmen and Makaseev to work with and see their own footage, which according to them was very helpful in terms of its quality, before sending it off to Moscow.[61]

In return, Karmen and Makaseev allowed Spanish communist supporters working at the laboratory the opportunity to produce copies of the footage to produce newsreels and documentaries of their own to be shown in Spain. In this way, Karmen and Makaseev got the job done for Moscow with large amounts of quality footage produced and sent on time, and they encouraged local Spanish communists to gain access to Soviet footage and to produce films and newsreels for the Spanish public to try and win the hearts and minds of the Spanish public during the Civil War. In fact, Karmen and Makaseev became so involved with the Spanish communist movement that, on their own initiative, they helped to train Spanish youth to shoot footage and use

[60] Makaseev, *V revoliutsionnoi Ispanii*, 28–31.
[61] Ibid.

documentary film cameras and led to the communists having their own cameramen capable of shooting footage of the Spanish Civil War.[62]

Stalin's Documentary Cameramen and Filmmakers Speak Out about Being Poorly Prepared to Film War, 1939–41

By January 1939, the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs raised the pay for personnel operating in the Soviet newsreel and documentary filmmaking industry: directors would now receive anywhere from 1,000–20,000 rubles per film, as determined by their rank. Directors of the highest category received 1,700 rubles per month; of the first category, 1,500 rubles per month; of the second category, 1,200 rubles per month; and of the third category, 900 rubles per month. Film cameramen of the highest category would now receive 1,800 rubles per month; of the first rank, 1,500 rubles per month; of the second category, 1,200 per month; and of the third category, 900 rubles per month.[63] These were lavish salaries, since the average salary in the Soviet Union at the time was less than 100 rubles per month.

Such high salaries must have been an important incentive for Soviet cameramen and filmmakers working in documentary to provide work ever harder and come up with ingenious solutions to the challenges they faced in producing footage for the regime. One glaring issue faced by Soviet documentary cameramen and filmmakers was that the used foreign cameras they had been using were "wearing out" (*obezlichivaiutsia*) and that "increased the likelihood of breaking down" (*uskoriautsia ikh iznoshennost'*). And parts were difficult to acquire and repairs took a long time. With was the case with most of the Debrie cameras being used at the Leningrad Newsreel Studio by the end of the 1930s which were either in need of or had just gone through major repairs.

[62] Ibid.
[63] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 601.

This meant that the studio did not have enough cameras for all of its cameramen in 1938. As a result, two cameramen would work with one camera, alternating between them. Moreover, the studio rented the Debrie cameras from Lenfil'm, for 10,000 rubles for 5 months of use.[64]

An approach adopted by Soviet documentary filmmakers and cameramen was learning to fix their used foreign cameras themselves, often right in the field, as Karmen and his film crew did while filming in Spain and China, and other cameramen while shooting war footage in Abyssinia in the 1930s. In his diary entry from May 16, 1939, Karmen described the tedious and lengthy process by which he untangled a "nest" of film that had appeared in his Eyemo camera when the film had gotten off its proper track. He placed his camera in a special bag against exposure to light and, feeling his way through the film, untangled it so as to save the footage that had been shot. Karmen also described the lengthy and difficult process of disassembling and reassembling his broken camera. Taking the advantage of rainy weather, he spent two days with his camera disassembled with all its parts laying on a table and recalled how he feared he would not be able to put the camera back together again because of its many small parts. Yet, he persevered and was able to fix his camera afterward with much less difficulty. [65]

In September 1939, the Soviet Union stunned the world by signing an agreement of non-aggression with Nazi Germany. Despite the pact being one of non-aggression, the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement carried with it a secret protocol under which the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany divided much of Eastern Europe amongst the two powers. The Soviet Union would gain lands in Western Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and the Baltic states, and the Soviet Union prepared a military plan to send troops to occupy Finland.[66]

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[64] Statement of transfer of the affairs of the studio to the newly appointed director D. Dal'skii, December 15, 1938, TsGALI SPb, f. 356, op. 1, d. 1, l. 10.
[65] Roman Karmen, *God v Kitae: Zapiski kinozhurnalista* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1941), 94.
[66] Kenez, *A History of the Soviet Union*, 132-133.

The Soviet government was intent on producing and showing newsreels and documentaries about the successful, "voluntary," and joyous occasion of the new lands that had become part of the Soviet Union. The Committee for Cinematographic Affairs sent camera crews on special assignment to work alongside the Red Army into territories to be forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union.[67] In the case of Western Ukraine and Belarus, only days would pass after the Soviet Red Army had entered onto their territory, at the end of September 1939, before the Soviet government was already showing Soviet films, including newsreels and documentaries, to the local populations about the good life being achieved in now-Soviet Belarus and Ukraine, as opposed to the servitude the people in this region had endured under Polish domination. The first Soviet newsreels and documentaries of life in Western Belarus were produced by the Minsk newsreel studio and shown in movie houses to play up the nationalist sentiments that Belarusians who had long been living outside of Belarus were now part of the Soviet Union, and that all Belarusians were now living in "freedom" in the Soviet Union. The following summer, in July 1940, the film *Liberation* (*Osvobozhdenie*), about Western Ukraine's incorporation into the Soviet Union, directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko, was completed and released.[68]

Yet, the experiences of shooting footage for the regime abroad and in newly occupied regions between 1939 and 1940 showed to Soviet documentary film cameramen and filmmakers that they were poorly prepared to film an all-out war. They came out in full force to make it known to the Soviet leadership of the dire situation. Soviet documentary film cameramen and filmmakers emphasized that the stationary cameras they used were ill-suited for filming in the field and to call for a greater reliance on new Western hand-held cameras, particularly the U.S. made Eyemo

[67] Vishnevskii, *25 let sovetskogo kino*, 97 and P. V. Fionov, *Sovetskoe kino v datakh i faktakh (1917–1969)* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974), 125, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930-1945*, 631-632.
[68] Vishnevskii, *25 let sovetskogo kino*, 98.

camera. They argued that pushing them to rely on foreign stationary foreign cameras would leave them at a severe disadvantage should an all-out war break out. Soviet cameras were non-standard in their design. In other words, each camera was slightly different from another of the same model and type. As such, often spare parts would fit another if one broke. Soviet cameras cut up and destroyed raw film stock. They demanded that Soviet hand-held cameras either be improved or that the Soviet Union import new mobile hand-held foreign cameras.[69]

The main reason for the non-standard nature of Soviet cameras was explained by the documentary cameraman V. Dobronitskii in 1940 at a meeting of the main directorate for producing newsreels and documentaries. Soviet factory presses and equipment were not calibrated exactly enough to produce a standard product; therefore, much of the finishing assembly and putting together of cameras had to be done by hand, which made each camera a uniquely individual, non-standard product. Therefore, each time a camera needed to be fixed, it had to be sent to a repair shop, where a part had to be specially altered to fit the camera.[70]

Many times, repair shops could not fix the problem and cameras would have to be sent to the original factory that had produced the piece. "Our mechanics in the repair shops [qualified eighth-class mechanics] responsible for repairing studio equipment don't even want to take apart our cameras. It happened that a camera had to be taken apart, and the repairman wasted two days taking apart the front piece, in order to remove the front section with the matte glass. It turned out this was a very difficult business, because on the one hand, the repairman didn't know how to do this, and on the other hand, the piece was simply difficult to remove. Therefore, in order to repair the front part, we had to turn to the factory that had produced it."[71]

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[69] Transcript of the All-Union Conference of Workers of Documentary and Newsreel, morning session, April 15, 1940, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 37, l. 21.
[70] Ibid., 16.
[71] Ibid., 17.

The cameraman, Dobronitskii, explained that the Konvas had the bad habit of cutting up and ruining large quantities of raw film stock: "All of a sudden the camera can cut up film stock."[72] Another cameraman, Shapovalov, spoke of how often times his camera would scratch the film while filming due to friction on the paint and paint particles accumulating inside the cassettes, to the point that the footage was unusable. And no matter how he and others tried to clean the cassettes, the film stock still would get scratched.[73]

It did not help matters that the Soviet Konvas camera being used by documentary cameramen and filmmakers had not been intended for documentary filmmaking, but rather for feature filmmaking.[74] The Konvas was a large, heavy, stationary camera, and therefore difficult to work with in the field. It was also not built to withstand operation in the outdoors and under more extreme field circumstances. Documentary cameraman Krichevskii made the point that if one had to move on foot with the camera, one would become tired very quickly. He also agreed with his colleague that the camera had a bad habit of cutting up raw stock when filming.[75]

Kusheshvili went further, questioning why the Konvas was even invented in the first place as it was such a useless piece of equipment compared to foreign models. "Why did we have to invent the Konvas? There is the Debrie, there is the Askaniia, why couldn't we have taken what was best in them and brought that together and produced a quality piece of equipment? This would have been simpler and faster and we wouldn't have had to start from scratch." Kusheshvili added that he would only film with a French Debrie-L 1 camera, in fact, and that before that, he worked only with an Askaniia.[76]

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[72] Ibid., 18.
[73] Ibid., 22.
[74] Ibid., 20.
[75] Ibid., 22.
[76] Ibid., 24.

Then there was the issue of the Soviet copies of the U.S. Eyemo camera, which the country had only begun to produce in 1939: the KS-4 and KS-5. Karmen and his colleagues who openly criticized the KS-4 and KS-5 called for either the production of more reliable Soviet hand-held cameras or the outright rejection of Soviet hand-held cameras in favor of the Eyemo. Karmen had been abroad and cut his teeth in such conflict zones as China, Spain, and had filmed all across the Soviet Union; he spoke at length and publicly in the late 1930s and on the eve of the Second World War about his views and position about the Soviet copy of the Bell & Howell camera. In terms of the Soviet copy of the Eyemo, Karmen had little good to say about its capabilities. He argued at the same meetings that the Soviet copy of the Eyemo, which only just been launched in 1939, was a poor copy and could not replace the American variant. The reason was that the Soviet copy was not reliable, broke down constantly, and was difficult to fix. Such a camera, Karmen forcefully stated, could not be the standard used by Soviet cameramen during time of war. He pleaded with the others at the meeting that they demand from the Soviet film industry administrators and the Soviet government either to make the Soviet copy of the Eyemo equal in quality to its U.S. original, or if this could not be done, then to switch completely to the Bell & Howell Eyemo.[77]

Karmen made the point that he only worked with the American produced Eyemo. The first time, he and the other cameraman with him purchased the camera in Paris on their way to shooting the civil war in Spain in the mid-1930s. Since then, he argued, he would not shoot with any other camera: “I shot with an Eyemo in Spain and China, and the Sedov expedition. I believe that this machine is the most suitable for newsreel work. And if one truly learns to work with this camera, then I cannot imagine for myself a better machine for newsreel filmmaking.” When working in China, Karmen spoke of the fact that he had met some of the most well-known U.S. cameramen,

[77] Ibid., 38–39.

and all of those individuals relied on the Eyemo camera. [78] Karmen spoke with excitement about the new Eyemo with three revolving lenses he had received while in China.[79]

Karmen explained that American documentary and newsreel cameramen and filmmakers exclusively relied on the Eyemo camera for good reason: it was light, reliable, and easy to use.[80] Due to it being so compact, lightweight, and technically advanced when compared with stationary cameras, cameramen could feel confident they would not become easy targets when filming in the field under war conditions. And because of the camera's optical abilities, which were much more advanced than any stationary camera equipment, one could film without being in danger and at far off distances. In fact, Karmen was so passionate about the American-produced Eyemo that he came out publicly at meetings to push that the U.S.-produced camera become the standard camera used by the Soviet Union to film in war and conflict zones: "I believe that in war situations, we have to work only with the Eyemo."[81]

An attempt was made by the new chief at *Soiuzkinokhronika*, Vasil'chenko, to resolve the ill-preparedness of Soviet cameramen to film war. Speaking at a meeting of documentary filmmakers and film heads on April 22, 1941, Vasil'chenko assured Soviet newsreel workers that "an organizational victory" had been achieved together with the Ministry of Defense to prepare Soviet documentary for war, in which the management of the Main Administration for Documentary Filmmaking had been sacked and a war-film group had been created within the Ministry of Defense which would serve as the foundation of war-newsreel filmmaking for the

[78] Ibid., 33.
[79] Ibid., 34.
[80] Ibid., 33.
[81] Ibid., 38.

country. Vasil'chenko added that the "colossal mistakes" that had been encountered in the past when cameramen had been sent to Western Ukraine and Belarus had been rectified.[82]

Veteran cameramen were not as confident as Vasil'chenko, arguing that training alone would not help resolve the dire situation with so much poor equipment and technology, particularly when Soviet cameramen would now face countries with much better camera technology. How would they be able to shoot large quantities of footage dramatically and emotionally while minimizing casualties and loss of life when they were ill-equipped? Eshurin shared his hope at the same meeting with Vasil'chenko that the Ministry of Defense's promises of supplying special equipment, airplanes, and even tanks so that cameramen could shoot footage safely by either shooting from afar or by filming close to battles while protected would be fulfilled. In this way, cameramen's lives would be saved.[83]

In the short term, what followed the meeting in terms of the Party preparing Soviet cameramen and ensuring their safety during a future war was laughable. In accordance with an order issued by the People's Commissars, Vasil'chenko ordered that the director of the Central Newsreel Studio, assign a mere four newsreel cameramen to the Red Army to practice filming combat operations. The cameramen were Eshurin, V. Shtatland, Ia. Kogan and the filmmaker V. Varlamov. Moreover, the four were again issued a mixed grab-bag of used foreign and domestic cameras, some stationary and some hand-held: a U.S.-made Eyemo film camera, a Soviet produced Eyemo, and a Konvas. [84]

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[82] From the speech of the head of operations for the production of newsreel-documentary films F. Vasil'chenko at the conference of workers of newsreel and documentary, April 22, 1941, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 47, l. 6–8, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 137.

[83] From the speech given by the cameraman V. Eshurin at the conference of workers of newsreel and documentary, April 22, 1941, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 47, l. 18, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 137–38.

[84] Order No. 50 for the head-office of production of newsreel-documentary films, April 7, 1941, Museum of Cinema, Frontline cameraman fond, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 136.

On the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War, in 1941, at an All-Union meeting of directors and editors of the Soviet Union's newsreel studios, the young cameramen and filmmakers who had trained at VGIK and the country's regional studios spoke again with concern about the poor state of reliable camera technology at the country's seventeen newsreel studios, openly reminding participants that war was on the Soviet Union's doorstep and that the country had been very late in mobilizing its documentary filmmaking industry, producing its own camera technology only in 1939.[85] They again requested that the Party allow Soviet cameramen and filmmakers working in documentary to rely on U.S.-produced Eyemo cameras as a way out of the impasse. Vladimir Katsnel'son, a well-known cameraman and documentary filmmaker, again lauded the Eyemo as the camera all of the Soviet Union's newsreel industry coveted and attacked the Soviet produced KS-5 camera as being completely ineffective. He concluded that the Soviet camera was of no use and that the country's film administrators and political authorities had to focus more on producing better technical equipment, as war was on their doorstep.[86]

Yet the Soviets would not be able to produce a better hand-held camera. Karmen was right: what was called for were American hand-held cameras, yet such cameras were in short supply in the Soviet Union. Yet, it would be difficult for the Soviets to switch to importing U.S.-made cameras at a time of poor relations with the United States following the signing of a pact of non-aggression with Nazi Germany. As such, Karmen's and other cameramen's calls could not be made into a reality. Only when the Soviet Union finally allied itself with the United State after war broke out in June 1941 would the Soviet government come back to the ideas of Karmen and his colleagues.

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[85] Transcript of the All-Union Conference of Directors and Editors of Newsreel and Documentary, 1941, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 43, l. 37.
[86] Ibid., 76–77.

Conclusion

An interdependent relationship developed between the Soviet regime and its film documentary cameraman and filmmakers that defined the Stalinist documentary filmmaking industry in the 1930s. The Soviet regime provided its young cameramen and filmmakers with "carrots and sticks" from above and cameramen and filmmakers provided ideas, input, and initiative from below.

The kind of education and treatment provided by the Soviet regime of its documentary filmmakers and cameramen created a privileged cohort. They were given lavish salaries, adventurous careers, and privileged lives, sending graduates to the far reaches of the Soviet Union and the globe, to film Soviet achievements and the rising tensions and war abroad as well as the capitalist exploitation of the working classes. They were also given first-hand experience with sensitive information, whether it be Soviet deficiencies in documentary and newsreel capabilities or detailed knowledge of Western know-how, technology, and approaches to newsreel and documentary filmmaking, which were far ahead of those in the Soviet Union. They also worked and lived in fear of punishment should they not do their jobs. Such a combination of knowledge, privilege, and fear I suggest was linked an understanding of themselves of their importance and heroic nature of their work of bearing witness to and recording the historic epoch underway.

The Soviet regime then permitted leeway amongst its documentary film cadres to operate and provide input often as they saw fit and to work outside official instructions, so long as the production of documentary footage was ensured. Cameramen moved from various spheres in the Soviet film industry to documentary without official permission. Working with used foreign cameras, they learned to fix them right in the field rather than send them to official repair shops to

be fixed. Young cameramen and filmmakers often decided what risks and approaches to take in order to acquire footage. And they spoke their minds, openly discussing the poor state of affairs with Soviet camera technology and the fact that they were not prepared to film a total war, should a war break out.

The practices, vision, and efforts I have described in the previous two chapters were instrumental to the development and operation of a reconfigured Soviet documentary filmmaking industry under Stalin. In my next chapter I illustrate that it was now an industry that Soviet leaders saw as critical to their propaganda efforts and one that they closely micro-managed. It was also an industry that despite pitfalls, challenges, and drawbacks had greatly expanded in terms of output and reach compared with the 1920s.

Chapter Three: The Importance, Achievements, and Drawbacks of Documentary Film Production and Reach Under Stalin, 1934-1941

Introduction

Whether studying the history of Soviet Russia or Soviet cinema, scholars have been much more focused on Stalinist feature filmmaking, which they considered to be a more important medium for Stalin than newsreels and documentaries. They assumed there was little of interest to study in terms of Stalinist documentary due to the increasingly didactic and formulaic nature of films, a kind of wasteland in which innovation was stifled, experimentation curtailed, and Soviet documentary as it had operated in the 1920s had died. If scholars looked at documentary in the 1930s, they focused on the side-lining of such innovative documentary filmmakers such as Dziga Vertov or tracing the careers of certain documentary filmmakers and cameramen such as Esfir' Shub or Roman Karmen: their output and personal fates. Instead, they concentrated on the medium during the New Economic Policy of the 1920s, calling the period a "Golden Age" for Soviet documentary, when great luminaries were able to experiment and innovate. [1] [2]

I add to scholarship about Soviet cinema development during the 1930s by illustrating that the newsreel and documentary filmmaking under Stalin was a highly important component of mass

[1] See Youngblood, for example, who states that by 1928, "the nonacted film had had its reputation hopelessly tarnished by its connection with artistic leftists like Dziga Vertov, Sergei Tretiakov, and the Lef group" (*Soviet Cinema*, 169). Therefore, according to Youngblood, feature became the dominant form of cinematic production in the Soviet Union in the 1930s (ibid., 169–87). Recent treatments of Soviet cinema development continue to focus on Soviet feature filmmaking; see Miller, *Soviet Cinema* and Belodubrovskaya, "Politically Incorrect." For a discussion of the 1920s as a "Golden Age" for Soviet documentary, see Youngblood, *Soviet Cinema*, 236 and Taylor, *The Politics of Soviet Cinema*, 152-157. Taylor rightly points out that though there was much innovation and experimentation, the Bolsheviks saw the 1920s as a lost decade because Soviet cinema had not become a mass weapon of state propaganda. It had not fulfilled the Party's vision for a mass documentary cinema able to reach millions, particularly in rural areas of the Soviet Union, with simple messages to mobilize audiences to take part in the Soviet project and to become Soviet in the process. Yet, Taylor's work stops in 1928–29 (ibid.).

cultural policies for the regime by the mid-1930s, something that deserves serious scholarly attention.[3] It was under Stalin that the Soviet Union came to operate an expansive and impressive state-run documentary filmmaking industry compared with the 1920s. The number and types of documentary films and footage produced and shown to audiences at home and abroad expanded, the amount of state control, attention, and involvement in the industry grew, and the number of studios had increased. Party leaders, including Stalin himself, were highly involved in trying to ensure the success of Soviet documentary and newsreel efforts in reaching millions at home and abroad. Stalin and other important Party leaders routinely watched Soviet newsreels and documentaries alongside feature films, provided critical resources to cameramen, filmmakers, and film administrators, and were intimately involved in providing reviews, edits, and comments about Soviet documentary and newsreel footage to ensure ideological soundness and mass interest. Yet, it was also an industry that continued to be characterized by poor indigenous technology and infrastructure, missed production and exhibition targets, and didactic and formulaic films. Still, Soviet achievements with documentary by the Soviet Union in the 1930s were impressive I would argue when compared with the 1920s and given the challenging circumstances within which the industry operated and the short time that had elapsed since the end of the New Economic Policy.

Soviet Leaders' Interest and Involvement in Documentary and Newsreel Efforts, 1934-1941

By the mid-1930s, Soviet leaders, Joseph Stalin, Viacheslav Molotov (Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars), Lazar Kaganovich, Andrei Zhdanov, Andrei Andreev, and

[3] One of the few scholars to mention Stalinist documentary of the 1930s is Kenez, who writes that, "by World War II, the Soviet film industry possessed an impressive tradition of making documentaries, and artists of considerable experience" (Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society from the Revolution to the Death of Stalin* [London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2001], 169). However, Kenez does not elaborate further about what made Soviet documentary so impressive.

others closely administered, reviewed, and tracked Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts. Shumiatskii sent routine reports and updates to Kaganovich and Andreev on the work of Soviet camera crews filming abroad in the mid-1930s, such as in the case of the filming of the Spanish Civil War by Karmen and Makaseev in 1936.[4] Shumiatskii routinely reported to Molotov about the reception of Soviet documentaries and newsreels abroad. In February of 1937, Shumiatskii informed Molotov in a formal note about how well received the documentary film *Spain in Flames* (1937), based on the work of Karmen and Makaseev film crew, had been in the United States, and the fact that American film companies were interested in acquiring a large shipment of Soviet newsreels on the same theme of the Spanish Civil War.[5]

We also have evidence from Shumiatskii, that by the mid-1930s Stalin, along with Kaganovich, Sergei Kirov, Zhdanov, and other Soviet leaders, personally watched newsreels and documentaries. Stalin became a censor of Soviet newsreels and documentaries providing edits and comments to some of the most popular documentary films of the period before they could be released. This was not the first time that Stalin had been involved in watching and commenting on Soviet newsreels, documentaries, or documentary footage. Going as far back as 1924, according to Shumiatskii, Stalin commented on a documentary film of Lenin's funeral: *The Funeral of Lenin* (*Pokhorony Lenina*, 1924).[6] He was impressed by the film and its potential of convincing international audiences that the Soviet Union was strong and stable following Lenin's death. In

[4] See Shumiatskii's report to Kaganovich and Andreev about the work of Boris Makaseev and Roman Karmen in Spain, August 25, 1936, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 4, d. 27, l. 1, as reprinted in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 421.
[5] See Shumiatskii's memo to Molotov, February 4, 1937, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 958, l. 33, in ibid., 464.
[6] From Chapter One, we also know of the case of Stalin having been impressed with Esfir' Shub's documentary film trilogy from 1927.

this way, the film could dispel rumors abroad that had spread of the Soviet people demonstrating against the Soviet government following Lenin's death.[7]

After screening, Vertov's *Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass* (*Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbassa*, 1930) in 1931, Stalin criticized the film for its "misplaced over-cleverness" (*oshibochnoe zaumnichanie*). He called on Soviet cinema to produce films, feature, documentaries, and newsreels that were much more intelligible to the masses. Stalin's pronouncements about Vertov's film and Soviet cinema in general were followed by a resolution by the Central Committee from December 8, 1931 calling on film experts, film administrators, and others to expand and improve Soviet film capabilities: film administration, technology, cadres, production, distribution, and reception and an article in Pravda "On Bolshevik Rails" ("Na Bol'shevistskie rel'sy") from December 14, 1931.[8]

Now, Stalin not only watched completed newsreels and full-length documentaries, but also clips of documentary footage he thought important enough in order to provide input before the footage was included in a finished film. In June 1934, having reviewed the film *Cheliuskin*, Stalin approved of its release but personally provided a series of edits and comments to be made to it by the head of the country's filmmaking industry, Shumiatskii.[9] Stalin's edits and comments were included in a resolution by the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee, "On the film *Cheliuskin*."[10]

After screening newsreel footage of Soviet parades commemorating the October Revolution and watching footage that would become the film *Ankara – the Heart of Turkey*

[7] Outline by Boris Shumiatskii of "Stalin and Film": Draft outline of the book *Comrade Stalin and Cinema*, January 1935, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 828, l. 88-102, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 81.
[8] Ibid., 84–85.
[9] Short-hand notes by Boris Shumiatskii of the evening viewing and discussion of *Cheliuskin* by Stalin and other Soviet leaders, June 29, 1934, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 828, l. 43–45, in ibid., 937–39.
[10] Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party "About the film *Cheliuskin*," June 29, 1934, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 948, l. 13, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 239.

(*Ankara – serdtse Turtsii*, 1934) directed by Sergei Iutkevich, Stalin called on those working in Soviet documentary to produce much simpler Soviet documentaries and newsreels that were not so bogged down in drawn out shots of details. He called on more concise newsreels and documentaries that did not copy the approaches of feature filmmakers.[11]

Stalin commented on where a film was too short or too long, whether a newsreel might be better suited to become a full-length documentary or produced as several newsreels instead of one. For example, having watched footage of a parade of athletes in Leningrad in June of 1935, Stalin told First Deputy Head of the country's filmmaking industry E. Chuzhin that such an important parade deserved to be produced in two to three longer parts and not simply broken into multiple shorter newsreels.[12]

Stalin could decide when a documentary film should be released and whether a documentary film be permitted to have sound footage. In May of 1935, Stalin approved sound footage of his speech given at the opening of the Moscow metro to be included in the final version of a documentary film and that it be released urgently to the public that night and the next day it be shown on the screens of the Soviet Union.[13]

He even requested that narration he deemed unnecessary or harmful be removed or that narration he deemed appropriate be added. Having watched a newsreel about the Moscow athletic parade, Stalin instructed Chuzhin several times to remove the word "great" before Stalin's name in the inter-titles to the newsreel.[14]

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[11] Ibid., 86.
[12] Ia. Chuzhin's notes about the screening (of films by Party leaders) from June 25, 1935, June 25, 1935, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 829, l. 46–50, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 1021–23.
[13] Short-hand notes by Boris Shumiatskii of the evening viewing and discussion of *Cavalry Crossing*, *Enemies and Trails*, and aviation film material filmed from the plane "Maxim Gorky" by Stalin and other Soviet leaders, May 18, 1935, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 829, l. 37–39, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 1015–17.
[14] Short-hand notes on the discussion by Ia. Chuzhin during the screening of films, July 3, 1935, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 829, l. 51–54, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 1023–25.

Finally, Stalin watched documentaries and newsreels because he immensely enjoyed the films themselves and he could watch certain documentaries and newsreels multiple times. For instance, at the end of February of 1936, Stalin watched the documentary film *Worker-Peasant* (*Raboche-krestianskaia*, 1936), directed by M. Slutskii, three times and along with other Party leaders, sang the songs along with the film.[15]

By the mid-1930s Stalin had also become personally involved in trying to ensure that cameramen and filmmakers receive the right kinds of camera technology for important film projects such as the filming of May Day celebrations and parades. For example, in June 1935, when the documentary filmmaker Iosilevich pointed out that the camera technology they had used for producing the film about Moscow parade of sportsmen and women was of poor quality and that they were in short supply of good cameras for future film projects. He asked that Stalin, give Shumiatskii permission to purchase foreign cameras specially produced for filming documentary footage. Iosilevich also told Stalin he would provide him with an official report in which he would elaborate what kinds of technology *Soiuzkinokhronika* needed in order to improve its work. Stalin not only upheld Iosilevich's requests and suggestions but asked how many cameras exactly Iosilevich needed and turned to Molotov and Voroshilov that they make sure that the foreign cameras be purchased and that Iosilevich and *Soiuzkinokhronika* be provided all assistance being sought.[16]

[15] Short-hand notes by Boris Shumiatskii of the viewing and discussion of *We Are from Kronstadt* by Stalin and other Soviet leaders, February 29, 1936, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 829, l. 86–90, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 1047.

[16] Notes of Ia. Chuzhin about the film screening from June 25, 1934, No. 47, RGASPI, f. 558, op. 11, d. 829, l. 46–50, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 1022.

By the late 1930s Soviet authorities also turned to one of their most trusted institutions, the NKVD, to administer Soviet documentary (and feature) filmmaking efforts. To ensure its vast documentary film record was secure in case of a war, and to ensure it could reach audiences in the future. In April 1938, the Party instructed that the secret police, the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), take control of the State Documentary Film and Photo Archive (GAKFD). The decision came as part of a much larger effort by the Soviet regime to consolidate all of its archival holdings under the management of the NKVD to make sure that the country's most sensitive historical documents be placed in what the state considered its most secure hands and to help locate and systematize its holdings, showing to what extent the Party held documentary in high esteem.[17] In 1938, Shumiatskii was removed as the head of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, and in his place, Semen Dukel'skii, a chief from the Voronezh NKVD, took over the administration of Soviet cinema, including documentary filmmaking.[18]

The decision to expand the NKVD's control over Soviet cinema in part came about because there was a real threat of a pan-European war looming for the Soviet Union and also because the Soviet Unions was gripped by a hysteria of so-called internal enemies wanting to sabotage the Soviet project. Following the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, the signing of the Munich agreement between Western Powers, and Nazi Germany handing over the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia to Hitler, the Soviet leadership became fearful that an invasion by Nazi Germany of the USSR was only a matter of time, as the Western powers had betrayed the Soviet Union. To forestall the anticipated world war and to help the Soviet Union prepare itself for a Western

[17] The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree on April 16, 1938 placing all archival institutions in the USSR under the jurisdiction of the NKVD, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 554 and as cited in Tatiana Khorkhordina, *Istoriia otechestva i arkhivy: 1917–1980-e gody* (Moscow: RGGU, 1994), 179 and 312.
[18] Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 130-131.

invasion, in August of 1939, the Soviet Union stunned the world by signing a Pact of Non-Aggression with Nazi Germany.

Just days before the signing of the Pact of Non-Aggression, as part of efforts to tighten its control over the country's cultural sphere even further and attempt to prepare it for a coming war, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party abolished the Department of Culture and Enlightenment, which had shared responsibility for the direction and administration of the Soviet cultural sphere alongside the Department of Agitation and Propaganda. Now all of the Department's work was handed over to the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, and the new head of the Department would be Andrei Zhdanov, a close associate of Stalin who had proven instrumental during the Great Terror, proving his allegiance to Stalin by purging the Party leadership in the city and region of Leningrad. Zhdanov would be in charge and personally watch over the country's filmmaking sphere, including newsreel and documentary.[19]

"Documentary—A Weapon of the Party,"[20] 1934

In early 1934, film experts were boasting that Soviet documentary had become "a weapon of the Party."[21] Indeed, the country's state-run All-Union Newsreel Film Trust (*Soiuzkinokhronika*) founded in January 1932, responsible for administering all newsreel and documentary film production and their capabilities in the Soviet Union, was achieving impressive results in terms of film output by the mid-1930s. The Trust churned out dozens of full-length

[19] See the resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee about the structure and management of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, August 3, 1939, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 1013, l. 1 and RGASPI f. 17, op. 116, d. 9, l. 74 and l. 128–36, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945,* 627 and Karl Eimermacher, *Instituty upravleniia kul'tury v period stanovleniia: 1917–1930-e gg.: Partiinoe rukovodstvo; Gosudarstvennye organy upravleniia: Skhemy* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), 56 and 58.
[20] V. Iosilevich, "Documentary—A Weapon of the Party" ("Kinokhronika—orudie partii"), *Sovetskoe kino* 1 (February 1934): 24–28.
[21] Ibid.

documentaries and hundreds of newsreels per year on a range of themes including Soviet feats in exploration, science, medicine, production, culture, military preparedness, and nature and wildlife, as well as a range of news and information about the Soviet Union and the world. Soviet newsreels and documentaries covering the Soviet Union stressed the achievements of the country in the march towards communism, the threat of internal and external enemies, and constant vigilance to weed them out. Soviet documentaries and newsreels covering international events stressed to audiences that the world was a threatening place with capitalists, fascists, Nazis, and imperialist powers intent on bringing down the Soviet order, fomenting a world war, and enslaving the world to the capitalist classes.[22]

Soviet documentary by the mid-1930s had greatly expanded its capabilities in terms of its output volumes and variety when compared to the 1920s.[23] In 1926, the Soviet Union produced only one newsreel series called *Soviet Journal* (*Sovzhurnal*). The newsreel series covered a variety of subjects and topics from the Soviet economy to art, international news, and political development at home. It came out 39 times in 1926, approximately one issue every week and a half. In 1929, the situation had only slightly improved. The *Soviet Film Journal* (*Sovkinozhurnal*) newsreels series, which had replaced *Sovzhurnal*, now saw 84 newsreels produced that year. There was also a Ukrainian language newsreel series being produced, and a new newsreel series called *Socialist Village* (*Sotsialisticheskaia derevnia*). However, only a handful of issues of these last two were produced in 1929.[24]

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[22] Ibid. Also, the online site for the Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents (RGAKFD) at http://rgakfd.ru provides detailed information about the content of Soviet newsreels and documentaries produced in the 1920s and 1930s.

[23] For a comparison between the 1920s and 1930s in terms of variety and volumes of documentary film output consult the online site for RGAKFD at http://rgakfd.ru and conduct a search (*poisk*) of the "electronic film catalog" (*elektronnyi kinokatalog*). See also, Roman Katsman, "Documentary yesterday and today" ("Kinokhronika vchera i segodnia"), *Sovetskoe kino* 1 (January 1935): 68-76.

[24] Ibid.

By 1936, *Soiuzkinokhronika* produced a half dozen newsreel titles including the *Union Film Journal* newsreel series or *Soiuzkinozhurnal* on general news themes coming out every one to two weeks; *Socialist Village* (*Sotsialisticheskaia derevnia*), starting in 1929, came out every two weeks by the mid-1930s and was devoted to news about the life, progress, and challenges facing the Soviet countryside; *Pioneer World* (*Pioneriia*) launched in 1931[25] and was devoted to bringing news about the communist pioneer movement and Soviet youth growing up under the world's first communist regime; *Soviet Art* (*Sovetskoe iskusstvo*) begun in 1933, concerned Soviet cultural achievements and appeared every one to two months; *Science and Technology* (*Nauka i tekhnika*), began in 1931 and appeared every two weeks to a month, and concerned Soviet scientific and technical achievements; *On Guard* (*Na strazhe*), which first appeared in 1932, produced monthly items about the Soviet military and being vigilant and on guard against foreign enemies of the Soviet Union; and finally, a newsreel series targeting children under school age called *Little Star* (*Zvezdochka*), which appeared every three to four months starting in 1936.[26]

Outside Moscow, the number of studios devoted solely to documentary and newsreel production had ballooned as well by the mid-1930s as well. *Soiuzkinokhronika* operated a vast network of regional studios in Ukraine (Ukrainian Newsreel Studio, *Ukrkinokhronika*, founded in 1931), Leningrad (Leningrad Newsreel Studio, *Lenkinokhronika*, founded in 1932), Rostov, and thirteen other regional and local production affiliates across the Soviet Union.[27] The country's network of documentary film studios produced newsreels geared towards local audiences and issues such as *Soviet Armenia* (*Sovetskaia Armeniia*) produced in Erevan, *Soviet Kazakhstan*

[25] Vishnevskii, *25 let sovetskogo kino*, 53, and Veniamin Vishnevskii and Fionov, *Sovetskoe kino v datakh i faktakh*, 71, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 133.
[26] Katsman, "Documentary yesterday and today," 74.
[27] Iosilevich, "Documentary a weapon of the party": 24–25.

(*Sovetskii Kazakhstan*) produced in Alma-Ata, *Eastern Siberia* (*Vostochnaia Sibir'*) produced in Kazan, *Middle Volga* (*Sredniaia Volga*) produced in Kuibyshev, and many others.[28]

By 1940, according to an article in *Isskustvo kino*, the Soviet Union produced eight types of full-length documentary films. The first were historical-biographical films (*istoriko-biograficheskie fil'my*). These films were about historical periods or individuals based mainly on archived film footage. Such films included *Let's Be like Lenin* (*Budem, kak Lenin*, 1939) directed by M. Slutskii and *Vladimir Maiakovskii* (1940) directed by S. Bubrik. Then there was the expeditionary film genre (*ekspeditsionnye fil'my*) that became extremely popular with Soviet and foreign audiences, including such films as *At the North Pole* (*Na Severnom poliuse,* 1937) directed by I. Vendzher and Ia. Posel'skii, *Cheliuskin* (1934) directed by S. Posel'skii, and *Sedovtsy* (1940) directed by R. Karmen and M. Slutskii.[29]

A third genre was known as the 'film portrait' (*kinoportret*), about an important individual living and working in the current period, such as *Klavdiia Sakharova* (1938) and *Head of the Road* (*Nachal'nik dorogi,* 1939) both directed by Kiselev and a number of films devoted to portraying the various candidates for the position of deputy to the Supreme Soviet. A fourth type of documentary film was called the 'poetic genre' (*poeticheskii zhanr*). The genre was described as a 'poem of facts' (*poema faktov*). Such films as *Three Songs of Lenin* (*Tri pesni o Lenine,* 1934) directed by Vertov, *Lullaby* (*Kolybel'naia,* 1937) directed by Vertov and E. Svilova, and *Aviation March* (*Aviamarsh,* 1934) directed by N. Kaufman were examples of the genre.[30]

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[28] A. Kossovskii, *Sovetskaia kinematografiia: Sistematizirovannyi sbornik zakonadatel'nykh postanovlenii, vedomstvennykh prikazov i instruktsii* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1940), 65-66, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 608-609.
[29] Ilia Kopalin, "Disputes about Documentary Film" ("V sporakh o dokumental'nom fil'me"), *Iskusstvo Kino* (January 2, 1940): 34–35.
[30] Ibid.

A fifth genre was the 'film sketch' (*kinoocherk*) described as films in which specific themes were covered, included such examples as *Named after Lenin* (*Imeni Lenina*, 1932) and *To Live in Prosperity* (*Zhit' zazhitochno*, 1933) both directed by M. Slutskii, *Flowering Medal Bearer (Tsvetushchaia ordenonosnaia*, 1938) both directed by I. Kopalin, and *Eleven Capitals* (*Odinadsat' stolits*, 1939*)* directed by R. Gikov and L. Stepanova. A sixth type of documentary film focused on the 'military related theme' (*voennaia tematika*). Examples of such films were *Sons of a People of Labor (Syny trudovogo naroda*, 1937), directed by R. Gikov, I. Kopalin, and M. Slutskii, *Blow by Blow* (*Udarom na udar*, 1936), directed by I. Posel'skii, and *Red Army (Krasnaia armiia*, 1939), directed by I. Kopalin. This genre also included documentary films covering conflicts, wars, and militaries in operation around the globe in Abyssinia, Spain, China, at Khalkhin Gol, Western Ukraine and Belarus, and finally Finland.[31]

There was the documentary film genre called the 'travelogue film' (*vidovoi fil'm*). An example of such a film was *Across Crimea* (*Po Krymu*, 1939) directed by S. Posel'skii. And finally, there was the genre known as 'event films' (*sobytiinye fil'my*). Examples of the genre were such films as *The First of May* (*Pervomai*, 1939), directed by M. Slutskii and F. Kiselev, and *Parade of Youth* (*Parad molodosti*, 1939), also directed by M. Slutskii and F. Kiselev.[32]

Soviet Leaders' Interest in Expanding the Reach of Stalinist Newsreels and Documentaries at Home and Abroad, 1934–41

As early as 1925, Soviet leaders had created the Soviet Friends of Soviet Cinema (ODSK) to help with cinefication efforts (*kinofikatsiia*) to expand the reach of Soviet films with audiences, studying audiences and tastes, and overall finding ways to promote cinema within and outside the

[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid.

Soviet Union.[33] In 1930, Party leaders had introduced its first set of laws that made the demonstration of documentaries and newsreels mandatory in film theaters across the country.[34]

Yet it was only in the mid-1930s that Soviet leaders finally had sufficient numbers of trained cadres, resources, and film exhibition equipment and technology to exhibit documentaries and newsreels on a mass scale across the country. At the Eighteenth Party Congress of 1939, Stalin in a speech entitled "The further lifting of the material and cultural conditions of the people" provided statistics about the expanded number of pieces of equipment for film exhibition (*kinoustanovki*) in the country. The number of *kinoustanovki* had increased from 1933 to 1939 from 28,000 to 48,000. For the countryside, an additional 7,500 *kinoustanovki* were built for the same period, rising from approximately 17,500 to around 25,000.[35]

When the documentary film *Cheliuskin* was shown for the first time to audiences in Moscow in July 1934, 26 theaters demonstrated the film to the public in the capital alone.[36] Special movie houses devoted solely to newsreels had been set up in 1935 in Moscow, carrying the names "News of the Day" (*Novosti dnia*) and "Chronicle" (*Khronika*),[37] and in Leningrad, then in regional and republican cities in the USSR. The new *Novosti dnia* movie houses became increasingly popular with audiences in the Soviet Union. In October of 1935, the number of viewers at the *Novosti dnia* movie houses in the city of Leningrad stood at 11,768. In November, the number of viewers watching such newsreels had increased to 37,073 and in January of 1936

[33] Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema*, 99-101.
[34] One such law was introduced in the Ukrainian SSR on February 1, 1930; see "Film and Life" ("Kino i zhizn'"), *Kino* 4, February 1, 1930, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 13. Yet, in 1930, there were still too few copies of films and newsreels and the infrastructure was too limited in the Soviet Union to reach audiences on a mass scale.
[35] Lebedev, *Partiia o kino*, 46.
[36] See *Pravda*, July 17, 1934, as cited in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 239.
[37] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 354. The first attempt at having a Soviet theater show only newsreels took place five years earlier in Moscow in January of 1930. See *Kino* 1, January 7, 1930, 4 as cited in ibid., 10.

had reached 77,000.[38] By May of 1936, the new newsreel film series *Pioneriia* had become mandatory viewing for Soviet youth when attending youth movie houses.[39]

Moreover, by the mid-1930s, the Soviet Union exhibited documentary films and newsreels not only in movie theaters but in schools, at military bases, in hospitals, factories, movie houses, and outdoors. Full-length documentaries and newsreels reached factory workers, the intelligentsia, peasants, military personnel, children, and national minorities. Travelling screens were set up in the countryside and during film festivals (*kolkhoznye kinofestivali*) held at collective farms during holidays, spring sowing, and fall harvest campaigns where peasants were exposed to Soviet newsreels and documentaries. Finally, Soviet newsreels and documentaries were also being shown right at the sites of socialist construction and industrialization in make-shift theaters and with mobile film screens.[40]

Soviet leaders also relied on exhibits at movie houses across the Soviet Union to help instill the idea of a coming attack from the capitalist West. In April 1938, they included such exhibits as *The National Front Battling against Fascism and War* (*Narodnyi front na bor'be protiv fashizma i voiny*), *Capitalist Encirclement and the Defense of the Country* (*Kapitalisticheskoe okruzhenie i oborona strany*) and special exhibits about events in Spain, China, and Austria.[41] Most were accompanied by footage, newsreels, and documentaries on the same subjects. Along with showing war-related and military-defense documentaries and newsreels (followed by feature films),

[38] Reports, summaries for districts and correspondence with the district committees of the Party and film trusts about the condition and work of film theaters and mobile film screens in district committees of the region, June 3, 1937 to December 29, 1937, more exact date unknown, TsGAIPD SPb, f. 24, op. 8, d. 497, l. 33ob.
[39] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 402.
[40] Katsman, "Documentary today and yesterday," 74.
[41] Memoranda and reports about the work of the Lengorkino trust, January –October 1938, sometime in April of 1938, TsGALI SPb, f. 386, op. 1, d. 1, l. 33.

cinemas in the Soviet Union routinely served as venues for informational and news exhibits on the international situation and commemorating military anniversaries and holidays.[42]

The year 1940 witnessed a major anniversary: the twentieth anniversary of the creation of state run cinema in the Soviet Union. *Glavkinoprokat* instructed that cinema workers across the city of Leningrad and Leningrad region be shown films celebrating the development of filmmaking in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Tbilisi, Minsk, Baku, Yerevan, Tashkent, and Odessa through a number of film nights. *Glavkinoprokat* also recommended talks about and screenings of Soviet newsreels and documentary filmmaking efforts be included.[43] Along with films, film theaters in Leningrad organized film exhibits familiarizing audiences with the development and importance of cinema in the Soviet Union, including an exhibit on Soviet newsreel filmmaking efforts entitled "On Soviet Newsreels" (*O Sovetskoi kinokhronike*).[44] If one assumed that most of the Soviet Union's main republican cities and regional cities in the republics were showing similar films and placing exhibits dealing with these themes as well, this was an impressive feat.

Not only were Stalinist newsreels and documentaries being shown in the Soviet Union in greater numbers and to larger audiences, but the Soviet Union was increasing its exports abroad.[45] The Soviet Union was competing with other global powers, including colonial powers, for the attention of world audiences. Great Britain, Italy, France, Germany, the United States, and Japan

[42] Transcript of the report from the conference of deputy directors of the film theaters of the Lengorkino trust, April 13, 1938, TsGAIPD SPb, f. 25, op. 8, d. 107, l. 23.
[43] Documents for conducting the 20th anniversary of Soviet cinematography, February 1–February 15, 1940, exact date unknown, TsGALI SPb, f. 245, op. 3, d. 65, l. 8.
[44] Memoranda and reports of the work of the Lengorkino trust, January–October 1938, no exact date known, TsGALI SPb, f. 386, op. 1, d. 1, l. 31.
[45] D. Iashin and M. Lengefer, "Soviet Cinema on Foreign Screens" ("Sovetskaia kinokhronika na zagranichnykh ekranakh"), *Sovetskoe kino* 4 (April 1934): 52–60.

had all developed and expanded their documentary filmmaking capabilities by the mid-1930s and were exporting films abroad to bring their ideologies and cultures to foreign audiences.[46]

The number of films exported and countries being exported to had increased markedly. Between 1934 and 1935 alone, the Soviet Union saw its annual newsreel exports go up from 8 films to 98 films.[47] Soviet documentaries were taking top prizes at the world's first international film festivals, which could not have gone unnoticed by the either Soviet leadership or Soviet film administrators. In August 1934, at the second international film festival held in Venice, the Soviet Union sent several full-length documentary films to compete internationally, including *Cheliuskin*, *Three Songs of Lenin*, *Snowy March* (*Snezhnyi Marsh*, 1934) *Parade of Youth* (*Marsh Molodosti*, 1934), directed by O. Podogretskaia and L. Zalkind, and others. Moreover, Soviet documentary films were often greeted with applause, with *Cheliuskin* and *Three Songs of Lenin* garnering the most interest. In fact, the Soviet Union walked away with a Biennial Cup for best national presentation for *Cheliuskin* and *Three Songs of Lenin*.[48] In France, at the international exhibition

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[46] For an introduction to the film industries of Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and Fascist Italy in the 1930s, see Paul Grainge, Mark Jancovich and Sharon Monteith, "Totalitarianism, Dictatorship and Propaganda," in *Film Histories: An Introduction and Reader*, ed. Paul Grainge, Mark Jancovich and Sharon Monteith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 208–14. For a discussion of documentary filmmaking development in Japan, refer to Abe Mark Nornes, *Japanese Documentary Film: The Meiji Era through Hiroshima* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 62, 63, 66–67, and 70. For an excellent illustration of the interest of the Nazi leadership in documentary and newsreel and the types of films produced, see Hilmar Hoffmann, *The Triumph of Propaganda: Film and National Socialism, 1933–1945* (Providence and Oxford: Bergham Books, 1996), 154 and 115–240. For a treatment of U.S. documentary filmmaking capabilities, see, Raymond Fielding, *The American Newsreel: A Complete History, 1911–1967*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2006), 154–62. For excellent discussions of non-Hollywood and US government documentary filmmaking efforts in the United States, see Betsy A. McLane, *A New History of Documentary Film* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), 93–115, and Jeffrey Geiger, *American Documentary Film: Projecting the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 86–120. For an excellent treatment of the French government's interest in documentary filmmaking see, Alison Levine, *Framing the Nation: Documentary Film in Interwar France* (London; New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Incorporated, 2010). For an in-depth discussion of the British government's documentary filmmaking efforts from the 1920s to the 1940s, see Paul Swann, *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[47] Memorandum by Boris Shumiatskii to the Central Committee and Council of People's Commissars about the export of Soviet films abroad, August 8, 1936, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 958, l. 20–25, as reprinted in Bondareva *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 337.

[48] Boris Shumiatskii, *Sovetskii fil'm na mezhdunarodnoi kinovystavke* (Moscow: Kinofotoizdat, 1934), 11, 22, 100–11.

in November 1937, the Soviet Union took home the highest honors for the documentary films, *At the North Pole*, *The Stalin Tribe* (*Stalinskoe plemia*, 1937), and *Moscow-Volga* (*Moskva-Volga*, 1937), directed by R. Gikov.[49]

It was not the first time that Soviet newsreels and documentaries had been showing up abroad. As the world's first self-proclaimed socialist state, the Bolsheviks believed they were ushering in a global socialist revolution. Intent on spreading their messages around the world and pushing the world to overthrow capitalism and embrace communism, the Bolsheviks set up the *Comintern* (Communist International) in 1919. The *Comintern*, together with the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, would tap media, art, and culture both in the Soviet Union and abroad to promote a global communist revolution.[50]

After 1925, Soviet leaders set up another organization responsible for Soviet documentary and newsreel film exports (and imports): the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (*Vsesoiuznoe Obshchestvo Kul'turnykh Sviazei*, or simply VOKS). Initially VOKS was officially tasked with cultural exchange between the Soviet Union and other countries. However, within VOKS, the Union for the International Trade of Films *(Soiuzintorgkino)* handled film exports and imports for the Soviet Union. The creation of a film export and import section within VOKS dated back to February 7, 1928 and coincided with the introduction of the First Five-Year Plan for reconfiguring Soviet society.[51] The problem for the export of documentaries and newsreels for the Bolsheviks throughout the 1920s and early 1930s though was that the production and reach of films continued to be very limited with too few films being produced, too few copies

[49] See, *Pravda*, November 7, 1937, 8 as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 513.
[50] Ludmila Stern, *Western Intellectuals and the Soviet Union, 1920-1940: From Red Square to the Left Bank* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 38-39.
[51] *Pravda*, February 7, 1928, as cited in Fomin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1863–1929*, 608.

issued, a poor distribution network abroad, and newsreels and documentary films that appealed more to the intellectually-minded, rather than the masses.[52]

Circumstances would change dramatically in favor of expanded Soviet documentary and newsreel exports by 1933. Soviet leaders had taken direct control over the country's filmmaking efforts starting in 1928 with the launch of the First Five Year Plan.[53] The ongoing world depression that had begun in 1929 in the United States must have helped to increase the reach of Soviet documentaries and newsreels abroad as more people abroad, particularly in the United States, saw the Soviet Union as an alternative to the crisis of capitalism.

In 1933, the United States recognized the Soviet Union diplomatically, which also made it easier to export Soviet films to the country. The Soviet Union's film office in the United States called *Sovkino* (later renamed *Amkino*) located in New York City had been distributing Soviet films across the United States since the 1930s. The New York market, was of particular interest as it was considered the most left-leaning and radicalized city in the country (both in terms of intellectuals and workers). By the mid-1930s, a number of New York film theaters routinely showed the latest Soviet documentaries and newsreels. The Embassy and Cameo theaters in midtown Manhattan became known for frequently showcasing Soviet newsreels and documentaries.[54]

Finally, in August 1936, the Hard Currency Commission within the Council of People's Commissars adopted a resolution to give permission to the film industry to export Soviet newsreels

[52] For an excellent discussion of the dissatisfaction of the Bolsheviks with Soviet cinema production and reach in the 1920s, see Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema*, 64-101.
[53] Ibid., 102-123.
[54] See, for instance, "Russia seen in Newsreel: Offerings at Embassy Theatre Relate to Recognition," *The New York Times*, November 27 1933, 20; "A Soviet Travelogue," *The New York Times*, July 30, 1934, 9; "The Screen: A Soviet Newsreel," *The New York Times*, September 3, 1934, 16; "A Russian Film Celebration," The New York Times, February 24, 1935, 5; and "The Screen: 'Spain Flames,' Depicting the Spanish Revolution, Opens at the Cameo," *The New York Times*, January 30, 1937, 21.

and documentaries abroad, irrespective of monetary considerations, that is, not paying heed to whether the films made a profit or provided revenues in order to "maximize their widest possible reach in all countries."[55]

Drawbacks and Limitations of Stalinist Documentary Film Production and Reach, 1934–41

However, there was a price to be paid for the kind of state-run documentary filmmaking industry that emerged in the Soviet Union by the mid-1930s. Increased censorship, the direct involvement by Stalin and other Soviet leaders and overlapping institutions, an emphasis that documentaries and newsreels be understandable by the masses, all conspired towards a didactic and formulaic product. For the most part, Soviet documentaries and newsreels now lacked the artistry, dramatic quality, and experimental techniques of the 1920s. The emphasis now was on Soviet 'life as it should be' (socialist realism) in the Soviet Union, not life as it really was.[56]

By the mid-1930s, Shumiatskii had even grown concerned that Soviet documentaries and newsreels were too serious and too focused on hard news. Speaking about documentary cinema (*kinokhronikal'naia kinematografiia*) at the All-Union Conference of Workers of Soviet Cinematography, he openly stated that documentary cinema should not simply be journalistic but have an artistic component as well. He argued for greater artistic freedom and imagination in order to make the films more interesting.[57]

Yet, in the same speech, Shumiatskii also defended socialist realism in Soviet documentary and newsreel. What Shumiatski was getting at was that the kind of artistry he was seeking in

[55] See the resolution of the Hard Currency Commission of the Council of People's Commissars, August 25, 1936, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 958, l. 19, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 421.
[56] For a detailed discussion, see, Roberts, *Forward Soviet!*, 122-137.
[57] Boris Shumiatskii, *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo: Vsesoiuznoe tvorcheskoe soveshchanie rabotnikov sovetskoi kinematografii* (Moscow: Kinofotoizdat, 8–13 January, 1935), 172.

documentary had to reflect the Stalinist documentary approaches of the 1930s, warning against a return to the experimental 1920s when, as he argued, filmmakers had focused on making documentaries exciting in form at the expense of their content, which was many times either missing or too abstract for ordinary people to understand. According to Shumiatskii, Soviet experimental documentarians in the 1920s had wrongly tried to compete with Soviet feature filmmakers in a battle over which genre was more important. Documentarians had resorted to "games" (*igry*) in filming ordinary life and people in order to uphold an incorrect theory of documentary as a form of "excitation" (*vozbuzhdeniia*) and "stimuli" (*vozbuditeli*). This, he argued, should not happen again. Instead, documentarians should experiment within the confines of the "socialist realist" canon.[58]

Another important set of problems facing Stalinist documentary filmmaking production efforts during the period was that the country could not overcome the continued shortages it faced of reliable indigenous film technology and infrastructure.[59] The Stalinist economy privileged heavy industry over light industry, of which filmmaking in general and documentary filmmaking specifically were part. Both *Soiuzkino* and VGIK (GIK earlier) were part of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry.[60] Thus, Stalin's crash industrialization and collectivization efforts achieved lackluster results in producing reliable and sufficient quantities of indigenous film technology throughout the 1930s.

This meant, even on the eve of the outbreak of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, Soviet lenses, cameras, and film stock were still either unreliable or not enough were on hand to satisfy the demands of the country's growing documentary filmmaking industry. Journals such as

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[58] Ibid.
[59] See Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, and Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, for excellent treatments of Soviet society's shortages and deficiencies during the time of Stalin.
[60] See Vinogradov and Ognev, *K istorii VGIKa, Chast' I (1919–1934)*, 17.

Iskusstvo kino (formerly *Proletarskoe kino*), *Kinomekhanik*, *Kino-foto-khim-promyshlennost'* and the newspapers *Kino*, *Pravda*, and *Izvestiia* published numerous articles about the issue of shortages of reliable indigenous technology from the late 1920s to the outbreak of war. In 1938, the film cameraman Katsnel'son bemoaned the poor state of Soviet film technology that hampered Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts in an article published for *Kino*.[61]

Take, for example, the case of raw film stock production. Soviet studios, cameramen, and filmmakers needed reliable supplies of quality indigenous raw film stock in order produce thousands of meters of film footage so that Soviet Union then could churn out dozens if not hundreds of copies of films to be exhibited across the Soviet Union and the world. In 1928, preparations had been made for producing raw film stock. Yet, it took three years for the Party to get two factories to produce raw film stock for the entire country.[62]

The quantity and quality of Soviet raw film stock lagged far behind what was required by the Soviet film industry. Soviet raw film stock was unreliable, because it was non-standard when it came to exposure. The result was that Soviet cameramen and filmmakers routinely were under or overexposing film when using Soviet-produced raw film stock. A great deal of footage had to be discarded, which was wasteful, and it was common for Soviet cameramen, filmmakers, and studios to have to order more raw film stock to make up for the unacceptable footage.[63]

The situation was even more challenging for the country's camera production abilities for documentary in the 1930s. In 1933, the country introduced its first factory producing its first test

[61] G. Katsnel'son, "Reconstruction is Moving Slowly" ("Perestroika idet medlenno"), *Kino*, October 11, 1938, as reprinted in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 577.
[62] See, Miller, "Soviet Cinema, 1929-1941," 115-116.
[63] Ibid.

cameras (Moskinap). And by early 1934, there were calls by film administrators for the production of a Soviet hand-held documentary film camera. Yet, the results were also lackluster.[64]

To supplement the country's insufficient indigenous technological capabilities and help ensure the production of quality footage, as I discussed in Chapter Two, the Soviet Union's documentary filmmaking studios and film administrators provided Soviet documentary cameramen and filmmakers a mix of used foreign cameras and raw film stock from Germany, France, and the United Sates. These countries' film stock and cameras were much more reliable and produced better quality footage than Soviet produced film stock and Soviet copies of foreign cameras.[65]

Due to red-tape, poor film technology and infrastructure, and a lack of film copies, routinely, Soviet schedules for documentary and newsreel production were routinely not being met and so audiences either could did not see Soviet films or films arrived weeks and even months late. It also did not help that Soviet film infrastructure in terms of exhibition centers also continued to lag in quantity and quality, which hampered the reach of Soviet newsreels and documentaries.[66] For instance, in May 1934, Soviet representatives in France sent an urgent report to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs in Moscow about the fact that it was difficult to find Soviet newsreels in French theaters. The cause was that Soviet films arrived late and so French theaters saw little reason to exhibit them. The representatives pointed out they were shocked that more than

[64] Draft resolution of the Organizational Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party drafted by A. I. Stetskii (chairman of the Organizational Bureau commission), January 17, 1934, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 114, d. 661, l. 97–99, as reprinted in Bondareva, *Kremlevskii kinoteatr*, 229–30.
[65] See, Miller, "Soviet Cinema, 1929–1941," 115-119.
[66] Ibid., 109-120.

three weeks had passed since May 1 and yet still no Soviet film about the May Day parade had arrived in France.[67]

By February 1940, the head of the control-inspectorate of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, M. Kovtunov, reported to Bol'shakov that the number of films to be shown abroad by *Soiuzintorgkino* was much less than was anticipated: only 41% of feature films (111 copies instead of the planned 266) were actually shown to audiences, while only 11.5% of Soviet documentaries and newsreels (102 copies instead of 873) had reached their intended audiences abroad, and those films routinely arrived not on schedule, which made them less appealing to audiences abroad used to news and information that was much more up to date.[68]

Kotunov also expressed concern the Soviet Union was having a tough time competing with US produced newsreels and documentaries abroad (whether in the United States or in other countries). Soviet documentaries and newsreels were still mostly silent, of low quality, and not entertaining as opposed to their US counterparts, which relied on synchronized sound, high quality US film stock, and focused on entertainment.[69]

Poor film technology, infrastructure, and red-tape also led to Soviet documentary filmmaking studios operating in the red. For instance, in 1938, the country's second largest documentary filmmaking studio in Leningrad still did not have its own laboratory and had to rely on the services of *Lenfil'm* (the feature filmmaking studio of Leningrad), *Belgoskino* (another city film studio), and a printing factory (*kopiroval'naia fabrika im. 1-ogo Maia*) to develop its footage. The services were not under contract but were conducted unofficially on the side. The studio also

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[67] Urgent memorandum from USSR representatives in France to the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs about the poor state of Soviet newsreels in France, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 4, d. 2, l. 23, as cited in Deriabin et al, Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930-1945, 275.

[68] See the report by M. M. Kovtunov, the head of the control-inspectorate group of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, about the results of the investigation into *Soiuzintorgkino*, February 20, 1940, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 4, d. 67, l. 3–8, as reprinted in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930–1945*, 657–58.

[69] Ibid.

did not have its own shop for repairing basic film equipment, which was leading the studio to turn to expensive repair alternatives for camera equipment and to private shops and on-the-side outfits (*kustarnye masterskie*). The physical size of the studio itself was small and unfit for producing the large volume of newsreels being demanded. The sound and lighting facilities in the studio itself were "absolutely unfit" (*absoliutno neprigodnyi*) in terms of volume and quality. The result was that a large amount of work time was wasted due to personnel rushing about throughout the city to various other studios and facilities and not fulfilling production targets.[70]

The Party repeatedly sent administrators to Leningrad in 1938 to see if they could resolve the issues, and Leningrad studio heads travelled to Moscow. In July of 1938, the head dispatcher of the Chief Committee and the head of the Chief Administration travelled to the Leningrad Newsreel Studio to see how to improve the situation. In September of 1938, the senior dispatcher from the Chief Committee in Moscow arrived in Leningrad to see what could be done, and Moscow called on the head of the Leningrad Newsreel Studio to report to the Administration of the Chief Committee about how restructuring of work at the Leningrad Newsreel Studio was progressing in connection with the decision by the People's Commissariat of the USSR in March to improve matters. And in October of 1938, documentary filmmaker Mikhail Posel'skii, who was a dispatcher from the Chief Committee of the Editorial Board, travelled to Leningrad with a brigade from the Chief Committee in Moscow.[71] Despite the repeated attempts made by the Chief Administration in Moscow, by the end of 1938 the situation had not improved and the studio was 92,000 rubles in the red.[72]

[70] Report about the transfer of studio affairs to the newly appointed director D. Dal'skii, December 15, 1938, TsGALI SPb, f. 356, op. 1, d. 1, l. 9.
[71] Ibid., 16.
[72] Ibid.

Also, production targets and plans continued to be unfulfilled. The number of All-Union sound newsreels planned by the Leningrad Newsreel Studio for the year 1938 was 13. Yet, only 8.5 were produced for the first 11 months of the year, only 65% of the plan. The studio's plan for the production of All-Union silent newsreels in 1938 was 6. The actual number produced fell far short of this, at two silent newsreels for the first 11 months of the year, or 33% of the plan being fulfilled. The total the number of silent newsreel stories planned for 1938 by the Leningrad studio was 140. In fact, only 79, or 56.4%, were produced. The studio had produced less than half of the total sound newsreels it had planned to produce by the end of 1938; out of 50 anticipated sound newsreels, only 21, or 42.6%, were produced.[73] Yet, there continued to be a huge problem with the number of films and amount of footage being scrapped as being unacceptable in quality (*brak*). In the first 11 months of 1938, the Leningrad Newsreel Studio saw 14 sound newsreel stories and 15 silent newsreel stories scrapped by the Moscow Studio for a sum total of 50,753 rubles.[74] After less than a year at his post, the head of the studio was removed for being a poor manager and administrator of the studio.[75] If such unresolved production problems were common at the country's second largest documentary film studio, they were likely endemic to other regional and republican studios.

Conclusion

By the mid-1930s, leading national Party figures and institutions were directly involved in administering documentary, and the country had developed a state-directed documentary filmmaking industry with dramatically expanded capabilities in terms of output volumes, types of

[73] Ibid., 3.
[74] Ibid., 5.
[75] Ibid., 20.

films, and reach than had been the case in the 1920s. Though enormous challenges remained and there was a price to pay for the kind of industry that developed under Stalin it was still an impressive result, when considering the country's much more limited capabilities with documentary in the 1920s and the difficult environment under which Stalin's documentary filmmaking industry operate under in the 1930s.

In fact, as documentary rose in output and variety, reach and reception, the Soviet feature filmmaking industry by the mid-1930s was faltering in terms of production volumes and variety due to excessive censorship, extreme production costs, the lengthy time it took to produce a film, which on average had increased to over one year, and the continued artisanal nature of Soviet filmmaking production.[76] More research would be welcome comparing the capabilities of Soviet documentary and newsreel efforts with those of Soviet feature filmmaking.

As I outlined in my first and second chapters, film cadres (film experts, cameramen, and filmmakers) were instrumental for the Soviet regime in developing and sustaining a centralized, expanded, and professionalized Soviet documentary filmmaking industry in the 1930s. During the Great Patriotic War, the initiative and home-grown solutions of the country's film cadres, particularly its cameramen and filmmakers, would again be instrumental, this time in ensuring that the production of combat footage and newsreels not be derailed, the focus of my next chapter.

[76] See Belodubrovskaia, *Not According to Plan*.

Chapter Four: Initiative, Ingenuity, and Unofficial Practices by Soviet Cameramen and the Production of War Footage on the Eastern Front, 1941–45

Introduction

On June 22, 1941, German forces invaded the Soviet Union. Top Soviet leaders, including Joseph Stalin himself, saw the war on the Eastern Front as a defining moment for the country and for the world, one that saw the Soviet Union fighting to survive and then liberate the peoples of the Soviet Union, Europe, and America from Nazism.[1] The Soviet leadership was deeply interested in marshalling the entire reserve of Soviet art, culture, and propaganda to mobilize domestic and foreign populations with official narratives of the war.[2]

Documentary was an ideal medium to convey the war to audiences. It incorporated simultaneously a wide array of communicative and artistic attributes such as sound, music, text, narration, moving images, and photographs. As the chief editor for frontline documentary filmmaking Iurii Karavkin made clear in his letter to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups in the summer of 1943, "only documentary footage will give our descendants the opportunity to see the real face of war, the heroic epoch of the fight between the free peoples of the world and the fascist barbarians."[3]

Yet, despite the Soviets' preparations in the 1930s for the inevitability and potentiality of a war, the Soviet Union's documentary filmmaking industry, like the country itself, was ill-prepared for the total war Nazi Germany unleashed. Many of the same issues that had hampered

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[1] See Stalin's radio broadcast from July 3, 1941, as reprinted in Joseph Stalin, *War Speeches, Orders of the Day, and Answers to Foreign Press Correspondents during the Great Patriotic War, July 3rd, 1941–June 22nd, 1945* (New York,: Hutchinson & Co., 1946), 9.

[2] For excellent coverage of the various artistic, cultural, and propaganda forms employed by the Party during the war, see Richard Stites, *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[3] Letter from Karavkin to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, sometime in the summer of 1943, Central State Museum of Cinema (TsGMK), f. 56, op. 1, d. 63/17, l. 1.

the Soviets in their documentary filmmaking efforts in the 1930s were exacerbated in war-time, which threatened to derail the production of war footage.

Soviet frontline cameramen faced shortages of reliable film technology, a problem inherited from the 1930s. The official administrative structure of the 1930s, which had already been overly bureaucratic and centralized, became ever more complicated as additional bureaucratic layers and personnel were added. The various personnel and institutions in Moscow often issued confusing and unrealistic instructions to cameramen that hindered their work and placed them in harm's way. They routinely requested that cameramen only shoot real combat footage and only go through official channels and follow official protocol, which often made it very difficult for cameramen to do their job.

For those cameramen who followed official instructions and channels, the human cost was horrific: hundreds were either wounded or killed. Yet, during the war, Soviet cameramen produced thousands of meters of combat footage included in hundreds of newsreels and dozens of full-length documentaries. How was this possible with so much working against them? What made the difference, I will argue in this chapter, was that many Soviet cameramen adopted a number of unofficial and unorthodox practices to survive, cope, and get the job done for Moscow.

In the first weeks and months of the war, with the Red Army in retreat, frontline cameramen turned to filming staged combat scenes. With the Battle of Moscow, cameramen learned to form close connections with local personnel, whether local military commanders or local officials from the Chief Political Administration of the Red Army (*GlavPURKKA)*, to acquire urgently needed goods, supplies, and resources. Cameramen, along with local personnel, had a much better understanding of on the ground conditions and what worked and did not work to ensure Moscow received copious amounts of combat footage. Cameramen also relied on their own ingenuity,

learning to fix cameras in the field instead of sending them to Moscow, economizing on film stock, and further resorting to the practice of filming reenacted combat scenes instead of genuine combat. Following the Battle of Moscow, cameramen also began openly defending themselves and their practices before their superiors.

At the Battle of Stalingrad as cameramen became exposed to extremely brutal field conditions many turned again to economizing film stock and waiting for the Red Army to advance in order to restage combat scenes. After Stalingrad, cameramen turned to drinking heavily and leaving the frontline for weeks at a time to cope with the horrors of Nazi occupation that they witnessed and were instructed to film in the most graphic way. Increasingly they also broke with the Party and film administrators, becoming frank, open, and critical towards Moscow, not only defending their practices, such as filming staged combat, but attacking their superiors for poor decisions and instructions, and proposing their own solutions to war-time challenges.

As for the Party, film administrators, and the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, they rarely removed or punished cameramen for adopting unsanctioned practices throughout the war. To do so I suggest would have threatened Soviet propaganda efforts, which were having great successes at home and abroad as attested by the reviews of domestic and international experts who often hailed Soviet war footage as being truthful documents of the Soviet war effort.

Central authorities in Moscow came to tolerate and accept the practices of cameramen as critical to keeping Soviet war-time film propaganda efforts going and even introduced changes in how the center administered cameramen and the instructions emanating from Moscow. Film editors in Moscow came to acknowledge that reenacted combat footage was a useful practice for cameramen to pursue. As the Red Army advanced through Ukraine, Party authorities in Moscow decentralized authority by granting greater control and say to cameramen and local personnel and

institutions to administer and supply cameramen and camera crews without having to ask or wait for permission from central authorities and institutions in Moscow. By the time the Red Army was to cross the border into Germany, the Soviet leadership accepted a proposal from an experienced cameraman to have military scouts rely on retrofitted 16mm cameras to ensure the final stages of the Soviet advance into Europe be recorded sufficiently.

My chapter furthers our understanding of the important role that agency from below played (in the form of home-grown practices and ideas) in shaping the Soviet Union in war-time. Recent scholarly treatments of the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War[4] exploring Soviet culture in war-time and what Soviet society and the frontline looked like in war-time for ordinary Soviet people, soldiers, women, and even journalists have noted the overly bureaucratic, centralized, and inefficient nature of the Soviet home-front in war-time and the break-down of power and authority between the center and the frontline during the war.[5] In order to survive and get the job done on the frontline and in the rear, greater local autonomy, self-reliance, and "market"[6] mechanisms emerged amongst the Soviet people while the Party's "power to rule by coercion was much reduced."[7] I apply this line of inquiry to the Soviet Union's documentary filmmaking efforts during

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[4] The Great Patriotic War (*Velikaia Otechestvennaia Voina*) was the name used by the Soviet Union for the war the Soviet Union fought against Nazi Germany on the Eastern Front from June 22, 1941 to May 9, 1945. To this day, the Great Patriotic War is the official name for the war in Russia.

[5] See, for example, Robert W. Thurston and Bernd Bonwetsch, *The People's War: Responses to World War II in the Soviet Union* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Roger Reese, *Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought: The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2011); Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: Life and Death in the Red Army, 1939–1945* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Kenneth Slepyan, *Stalin's Guerillas: Soviet Partisans in World War II* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2006); and Marius Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians, and Their War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999). Additionally, memoirs about life on the Eastern Front have recently been published and translated into English. See Boris Gorbachevsky, *Through the Maelstrom: A Red Army Soldier's War on the Eastern Front, 1942–1945*, trans. Stuart Britton (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008). Recently the personal materials of prominent Soviet journalists who lived and worked on the Eastern Front have been published. See Antony Beevor and Luba Vinogradova, eds., *Vasily Grossman, A Writer at War: A Soviet Journalist with the Red Army, 1941–1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005).

[6] John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London; New York: Longman, 1991), 50, 203.

[7] Thurston and Bonwetsch, *The People's War*, 5. See also Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (Armonk, NY; London: M.E. Sharpe, 1998), who argues the war "awoke in

the Great Patriotic War to illustrate that because of the routine failures of a centralized and bureaucratic administration, unrealistic instructions from Moscow, constant shortages of supplies, and the extreme nature of the war itself, initiative from below was instrumental in sustaining and shaping Soviet efforts at recording the war on film.[8]

Soviet War Cameramen Encounter a Bureaucratic and Centralized Administrative Structure, Summer 1941

In the first days of the war with the Soviet Red Army on the retreat, the Party leadership informed Minister for Cinematographic Affairs Ivan Bol'shakov that it was too busy with the war effort to be involved in the country's frontline documentary filmmaking efforts. Thus, it was on the initiative of Bol'shakov that the organizational work of frontline filmmaking took shape days after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union. Bol'shakov initiated the creation of frontline cameramen groups (*frontovye gruppy kinooperatory*) within the political departments of the various fronts. By the end of July 1941, close to 100 cameramen were producing footage of the war on military fronts from the land and sea thanks to Bol'shakov's initiative already by the end of July 1941.[9]

people the capacity to think in unaccustomed ways, to evaluate a situation critically" (18). My findings regarding frontline cameramen parallel Zubkova's findings.

[8] The Russian film scholar Valerii Fomin has published two excellent document collections containing a wealth of archival and other primary sources about Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts during the Great Patriotic War. See Fomin's *Kino na voine* and *Tsena kadra*. Fomin downplays the importance of unofficial practices adopted by cameramen and stresses instead their general heroism and patriotism. According to Fomin his aim was not to "achieve a radical assessment of traditional views and notions about the cinematographers of the war years" (*Kino na Voine*, 11), but rather to "defend the honor and victory of our frontline newsreel efforts from all of the dirt and slander" taking place in the liberal Russian press and in the West that began during the perestroika period as part of the "conscious and often times rather base deformations of the history of the Great Patriotic War," which were aimed at erasing "the memory of the Victory of our people" (*Tsena Kadra*, 5–6).

[9] Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 90.

Soviet frontline cameramen and film crews scattered along thousands of miles of the front needed to be administered, supplied, and instructed. The Main Administration for Documentary Filmmaking (*Glavkinokhronika*) had run and administered Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts since the 1930s. Fedor Vasil'chenko headed *Glavkinokhronika* from 1939–44, and Roman Katsman, was Vasil'chenko's deputy head. *Glavkinokhronika* administered all frontline filmmaking efforts through the country's main documentary filmmaking studios, the two most important being the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking (*TsSDF*), located in Moscow, and the Leningrad Documentary Filmmaking Studio. *Glavkinokhronika* was part of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs which fell under the under the purview of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda (*Agitprop*),[10] the Soviet Central Committee (*TsKKP(b)*), and Party leaders, including Stalin himself. Now that the country was at war, another Party institution came to administer frontline filmmaking groups: *GlavPURKKA*. During the Great Patriotic War, *GlavPURKKA* was first headed by Lev Mekhlis (and then Aleksandr Shcherbakov starting on June 12, 1942,[11] both of whom personally reported to Stalin. *GlavPURKKA* was the eyes and ears of the Party in the Soviet military. With frontline cameramen living and working alongside the military, filming sensitive footage of the war and military personnel, they too fell under the purview of *GlavPURKKA*.[12]

The highly centralized and bureaucratic institutional arrangement that emerged early on in the war combined with the war itself made it extremely difficult for Moscow to properly administer, manage, and supply its frontline filmmaking groups and for frontline cameramen. For

[10] The head of *Agitprop* was Georgii Aleksandrov, leading Party figure responsible for all culture and media in the Soviet Union.
[11] Iurii Petrov, *Stroitel'stvo politorganov, partiinykh i komsomol'skikh organizatsii armii i flota (1918–1968)* (Moscow: Voennoe izdatel'stvo ministerstva oborony SSSR, 1968), 298.
[12] See, Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino*, *1930-1945*, 840-846 and Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 850-896

example, Soviet frontline cameramen carried a leather-bound pass identifying them as a "Newsreel Military Correspondent" (*Kinokhronika voennyi korrespondent*), proving that they were special military correspondents working for the Central Documentary Filmmaking Studio in Moscow. However, besides the official passes, they had to also carry authorization papers (*udostovereniia*) showing that they were permitted to work on a specific section of the frontline, with a particular military unit, on a certain project. Those orders were issued by *GlavPURKKA* and had to be shown to local military officials in order for cameramen to work.[13]

Yet, the permission papers coming from *GlavPURKKA* routinely were not issued on time. It could take days for such permission papers to be received. All the while, cameramen could not commence filming, even if they were present and ready to do so. To be seen by military officials working with a film camera without proper paperwork could lead to severe punishment or even arrest. Cameraman Anatolii Krylov recalled how he and eight colleagues wanted desperately to film burnt out areas outside of Smolensk in July 1941 but could not do so because they did not have the proper papers.[14]

Another issue was the confusion that arose around who should provide logistical support to frontline filmmaking groups. Officially, critical supplies had to come from Moscow because, though they were assigned to work alongside the Soviet military, frontline cameramen were considered non-commissioned officers and did not have permanent certification as military personnel. However, Moscow was busy with the war effort and supplies from Moscow could take days to arrive. Meanwhile, frontline cameramen were being instructed to produce war footage. In

[13] See, confirmation by *GlavPURRKKA* on the Western front confirming the identity of Leonid Varlamov, a head of the frontline filmmaking group, instructed by *GlavPURRKKA* to produce footage on the Western front, May 8, 1942, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 6/5, l. 1 and the employment pass provided by *GlavPURRKKA* permitting Varlamov to produce film footage of military units on the Stalingrad front, October 20, 1942, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 6/8 l. 1.
[14] Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 141.

the first weeks and months of the war, local military units came to provide critical supplies such as uniforms, fuel, and transportation from their own units to cameramen.[15]

Soviet Frontline Cameramen Unprepared and Ill-Equipped, Summer of 1941

Complicating matters further for Soviet cameramen was that they were unprepared and ill-equipped to work under the extreme war-time conditions of the Eastern Front. Granted, many had filmed under difficult conditions in the 1930s, such as at Soviet construction sites and from the air and at remote locales like the Soviet arctic, at sea, and in the mountains. Some had even been lectured on military preparedness and how to film war during their education at VGIK or at local studios around the country. Others had filmed military training programs and preparations for a possible war in the 1930s. Some had sat in on talks given by seasoned Soviet veteran of documentary filmmaking, Roman Karmen, who along with Boris Makaseev had been sent by the Soviet government to film the Spanish Civil War and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Cameraman Vladimir Eshurin, along with a small camera crew, had been sent by the Soviet Union to film in Abyssinia during the Italian-Abyssinian War. Soviet leaders had sent film crews on special assignment to film the so-called "liberations" of Western Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States, and the Soviet-Finnish War in 1939. In preparation for a possible war, a few experienced cameramen who had filmed war were trained as part of a special military film group formed in April 1941 attached to the Peoples Commissariat of Defense.[16] And on the eve of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, a meeting of film supervisors and workers in newsreel filmmaking even took place to discuss issues related to filming combat.[17]

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[15] From the diary of Katsman, head of the filmmaking group on the North-West front, August 27, 1941, RGALI, f. 2749, op. 1, d. 116, Avtograf, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 60.
[16] Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 17.
[17] See, Chapter Two.

Yet, neither Soviet cameramen nor the Soviet people were prepared for the kind of total war that the Nazis unleashed on Soviet territory or the severe losses and desperate retreat of the Soviet military and its people. As cameraman Valentin Orliankin recalled, when he and other students studying to become documentary cameramen at VGIK in the 1930s were told about a possible they were under the impression "it would be waged on the territory of the enemy and that victory would come with little bloodshed. So we only imagined fanfare, the outcries of victory, which would only be enjoyable to film."[18]

All of a sudden, the country's young cameramen faced an unfolding national tragedy on the frontline, as the country and its people descended into the fiery cauldron of Nazi warfare. Initially, many cameramen found it difficult to film the destruction, suffering, and painful retreat they witnessed, as it was too much to bear. Krylov, along with Viktor Shtatland and Mikhail Shneiderov, reached what had been a village near Smolensk in 1941 that had been completely razed to the ground. Krylov recalled how he could not film because of the shock of what he was seeing. "I had to film, but my throat choked up from spasms."[19]

In the first weeks and months of the war, ordinary Soviet people tried to stop Soviet frontline camera crews from filming. It pained ordinary people that camera crews were recording the tragedy that had befallen the country. Aleksandr Kaznacheev was filming refugees fleeing the line of fighting near the town of Voroshilovgrad[20] when he realized that several people from the crowd were shouting at him to stop filming and someone even threw a rock at his camera. He could hear in the crowd yelling: "Why are you filming this? Stop filming! You are filming a disgrace!"

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[18] Unpublished memoir by Valentin Orliankin held by the Dovzhenko Museum, Dovzhenko Film Studio, frontline cameramen collection, Valentin Orliankin file, *Ekran ne dast zabyt': Vospominaniia kinooperatora-dokumentalista* (chernovik): Kiev, 1986, 284.
[19] TsGMK, frontline cameramen collection, no other information provided, as reprinted in ibid., 141.
[20] Aleksandr Kaznacheev and Ts. Kliachko, *Riadom s soldatom* (Moscow: Vsesoiuznoe biuro propagandy kinoiskusstva, 1982), 11–12.

Yet, according to Kaznacheev he continued to film because he understood that "these shots would be needed for history."[21]

Ordinary Soviet people also mistook Soviet cameramen for German spies. Sometime in the early summer of 1941, before Kiev had been occupied by the Germans, cameraman Valentin Orliankin was on his way to the Ukrainian documentary filmmaking studio in Kiev with this camera. Near the Vladimir market, he was surrounded by screaming women. They grabbed him and tried to seize his camera, accusing him of being a German spy. Orliankin tried to explain to them he was a Soviet documentary film cameraman. The women did not believe him and held onto his jacket, calling for a police officer. When the police officer arrived, Orliankin showed his identification papers and was finally let go to continue filming.[22]

Meanwhile, Germans forces quickly advanced. In September 1941, German forces surrounded the city of Kiev and over half a million Red Army soldiers were captured.[23] Amongst the Soviet soldiers now held by the Germans was a large Soviet film crew that Bol'shakov had sent to film combat footage in and around Kiev. Several members of the film crew were executed on the spot by the Germans, while the rest were forced to work for the Germans as cameramen.[24] It was a severe blow early on in the war for Soviet frontline filmmaking. The Soviets had lost some of their best frontline cameramen, the Germans now had on hand Soviet footage that could be analyzed and used against the Soviet Union, and the Germans could extract vital information from the captured Soviet camera crew about Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts.

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[21] The recollections of Aleksandr Kaznacheev, TsGMK, frontline cameramen collection, no other information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 143.
[22] Dovzhenko Museum, *Ekran ne dast zabyt'*, 273–74.
[23] David Glantz, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 75-78.
[24] As reprinted in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 722-723.

Complicating matters for Soviet frontline cameramen was that they were working with unreliable film technology which was now even more in short supply than had been the case before the war.[25] Though the Soviet Union produced its own film technology both before and during the war, the results were lackluster. Soviet film stock and hand-held cameras (copies of the American Bell & Howell Eyemo camera) continued to be of poor quality. Soviet film stock routinely under- or over-exposed footage. Soviet hand-held cameras constantly cut up film stock and broke down.[26] Only in October 1941 did the Soviet Union begin to produce their own zoom lenses, so that Soviet cameramen could safely film combat from a distance.[27] However, the longest-distance lens on hand during the war would only average 150mm. Cameramen relied on a hodge-podge of used 35-mm foreign and domestic film cameras, whatever they could get their hands on, that routinely broke down or operated poorly.[28]

Furthermore, production of Soviet cameras and film stock was drastically reduced as military production took precedence. The Soviet government made the decision in the first weeks of the German invasion to reorient much of the production at its camera factories in Moscow and Leningrad towards the production of military hardware for the war effort. The country's sole two film stock producing factories had to be quickly evacuated east before the Germans overran Ukraine in the early days of the war.[29]

Many Soviet cameramen in the first months of the war either could not or would not film genuine combat and instead, turned towards staging footage (*instsenirovki*) of combat or producing

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[25] See, for instance, Mark Troianovskii, *S vekom naravne. Dnevniki. Pis'ma. Zapiski* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2004), 160.
[26] See I. Gordiichuk and B. Makaseev, "S kinoapparatom na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," *Tekhnika kino i televideniia*, 4 (April 1975): 4.
[27] See the secret decree issued by the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs from October 22, 1942 about the Committee's intention to do so in RGALI, f. 2456, op. 5, d. 16, l. 64, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 749.
[28] Gordiichuk and Makaseev, "S kinoapparatom na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny," 4.
[29] Ibid.

insufficient amounts of combat footage. Katsman, who had been a reviewer of the frontline footage arriving in Moscow made known during a meeting in in late August 1941 with frontline cameramen of his extreme disappointment about the poor combat footage being produced. According to Katsman, cameramen had produced "weak" material that did not show the "war in action." He blamed cameramen for not showing "initiative," for "sitting around" and "philosophizing" too much instead of doing their job, and waiting for when the Red Army would advance. Katsman also called for cameramen to stop producing so much footage of staged combat scenes (*instsenirovki*) in lieu of filming genuine warfare. He instructed cameramen to break with such practices and give "dramatic, truthful, emotional war material, not footage produced in and around battles, but battles themselves." Katsman threatened to reconfigure filmmaking groups and remove cameramen if orders were not followed.[30]

When asked if they had any "qualms," "complaints," or "frustrations," about what Katsman had said, frontline cameramen fell silent.[31] With the war only in its first few months and most new to working and filming in war-time, the country's frontline cameramen were likely not yet prepared to defend themselves before superiors. As the war progressed though and cameramen became more experienced and confident working and filming on the frontline this would change.

Panic and Chaos Below, Incentives and Publicity from Above: Fall and Winter of 1941–42

By early October 1941, German forces were approaching Moscow. Panic and fear gripped the city.[32] Chaos engulfed the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking, and the morale of film personnel fell dramatically as the studio, along with the Soviet government, prepared to evacuate

[30] From the diary of Katsman, head of the filmmaking group on the North-West front, August 27, 1941, RGALI, f. 2749, op. 1, d. 116, Avtograf, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 63.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 81.

to Kuibyshev. In his diary entry dated October 20, 1941, Katsman spoke about the anxious mood at the studio in Moscow on the eve of evacuation: "The studio looks sad and tragic. No hiring. Many fired. Salaries have not been paid. People are walking around the studio drunk. There are attempts to destroy property. There is panic." By November 1, 1941, the studio was "in anarchy" and "management was in a state of confusion," according to Katsman. In typical Soviet parlance, he accused the studio of showing its "philistine, petty bourgeois, and pliable face."[33]

A few days earlier, on October 15, 1941, Vasil'chenko had informed Katsman of his intention to make sure the production of war footage in and around Moscow not be derailed[34] and to assist Katsman. "Irrespective of all of the difficulties, we will produce footage." Vasil'chenko and Katsman met and decided they would send cameramen to the various army units fighting around Moscow for filming. [3536]

Yet, cameramen and the studio in Moscow did not have enough funds and equipment on hand to begin filming. Vasil'chenko and Katsman requested that Eshurin and his film group return to Moscow to bring the necessary funds and film equipment to keep filmmaking efforts going. As Katsman put it, "the absence of Eshurin's group derails the work of our entire group. They have the money, we only have kopecks. They have hardware." Yet it took 16 days for the cameramen to arrive, due to poor transport, winter weather, and war-time conditions. This meant that for 16 days, what remained of the studio in Moscow had no money to operate.[37]

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[33] Katsman diary entry, October 20, 1941, RGALI, f. 2749, op. 1, d. 116, l. Avtograf, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 130, 133.
[34] Letter from Vasil'chenko to Katsman, October 15, 1941, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 201, l. 2, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 134.
[35] Katsman diary entry, October 1–15, 1941, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 129 and letter from Vasil'chenko to Katsman, October 15, 1941, in ibid., 134.
[36] Letter from Vasil'chenko to Katsman, in ibid., 134.
[37] Katsman diary entry, October 22, 1941, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 131.

Eshurin's film crew finally arrived in Moscow on November 1, 1941.[38] Wanting dramatic footage chronicling the defense of Moscow and the planned counter-offensive by the Red Army, Stalin now personally tasked Bol'shakov with organizing film personnel in Moscow and frontline cameramen working in the region to begin filming footage for newsreels and for a full-length documentary documenting the Soviet counteroffensive planned for December.[39]

Bol'shakov instructed that a make-shift headquarters for editing material coming from the front be set up in Moscow. The studio would have a laboratory, cutting room, editorial room, and personnel who worked on footage for newsreels and a full-length documentary film. Cameramen arrived at the studio from the front late at night after shooting war footage during the day. They reviewed their footage, prepared their cameras and film stock for the next day, and then slept right in the studio for several hours before returning to the frontline to film.[40]

To ensure dramatic footage be produced by cameramen and filmmakers, *Glavkinokhronika* increased the financial incentives to do so. In November 1941, *Glavkinokhronika* issued a decree setting the monthly salaries for all film workers working on special footage of the Western front and in and around Moscow. The salaries would range from 400 rubles per month for less-experienced cameramen to 1,800 rubles per month for seasoned documentarians such as Beliakov and Makaseev. The most experienced frontline cameramen would receive a monthly salary equal to or even more than the average monthly salary of leaders of frontline filmmaking groups, who would receive anywhere from 1,200 to 1,800 rubles per month. Film directors of war newsreels and documentaries would receive 1,800 rubles per month, the same salary as a top cameraman.

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[38] Katsman diary entry, November 1, 1941, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 133.
[39] From the recollections of Ivan Bol'shakov, no year provided, Scientific Research Institute of Cinematography (NIIK), as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 145–47.
[40] From the recollections of Il'ia Kopalin, no exact date provided, TsGMK, fond 56, no other information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 160.

Editors of footage and films were to receive 800 rubles per month. [41] For a comparison, the average monthly wage paid to Soviet workers employed in all-union industry enterprises was 375 rubles in 1940 and increased to 573 in 1944.[42]

Meanwhile, an official campaign popularizing and publicizing the work of frontline cameramen and filmmakers, their experiences, and their film output was underway. *Pravda* and other newspapers and magazines published articles, books appeared, cameramen gave lectures, newsreels were released, and exhibits took place showcasing the work of Soviet frontline camera crews, cameramen, and filmmakers.[43]

In early October 1941, with the Germans approaching Moscow, the House of Cinema in the capital opened an exhibition about the work of Soviet frontline cameramen entitled "Film Cameramen on the Frontlines of the Patriotic War" ("Kinooperatory na frontakh Otechestvennoi voiny").[44] *Pravda* published an article by Bol'shakov on December 26, 1941 entitled, "Soviet Film in the Days of War" ("Sovetskoe kino v dni voiny"). In the article, Bol'shakov underlined the historic nature and global significance of the war footage being produced by the country's cameramen.[45]

Such popularization coupled with added financial and other incentives must have conveyed to frontline cameramen and filmmakers that they and their work were highly important to film administrators and the Party. Such attention and incentives I suggest provided frontline cameramen and filmmakers the confidence to continue to rely on their own solutions and practices to produce combat footage in the face of extreme war-time conditions.

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[41] Decree issued by *Glavkinokhronika* listing the names and the salaries of frontline filmmakers and cameramen filming footage for special film projects of the Western front and the defense of Moscow, November 28, 1941, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 63/1, l. 19–20.
[42] Alec Nove, *An Economic History of the U.S.S.R.*, (London; New York: Penguin Group, 1989), 272.
[43] As cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 719, 720, 723, 732.
[44] Vsevolod Vishnevskii, *Sovetskoe kino v datakh i faktakh (1917–1969)* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1974), 143.
[45] As cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945,* 730.

War Cameramen Turn to Home Grown Solutions to Film the Defense of Moscow, Winter 1941–42

A severe winter engulfed Moscow in 1941–42, with temperatures dropping to a frigid -35°F (the lowest temperature ever previously recorded for the city was -44°F in 1940).[46] The sever cold threatened to derail the work of cameramen. Cameraman Teodor Bunimiovich recalled that "winding our cameras was a nightmare: our petrified hands refused to work."[47] Crawling through the snow in order to keep out of harm's way and enemy fire, snow accumulated in cameramen's felt wool boots (*valenki*), inside their coat and uniform sleeves, and on their camera lenses. Cameramen found themselves with cameras that routinely seized up and froze. Film stock became brittle and prone to tearing and scratching footage. Trucks and other transport were stranded in deep snow drifts.[48]

Conditions were so grave that Bunimovich recalled the desperate circumstances under which he and his colleagues filmed in the village of Spas-Pomazkino near Moscow in the winter of 1942 in the following way: "The road to the village was bombarded relentlessly by automatic gunfire and mortars. We turned to crawling, snow got into our *valenki*, into our sheepskin coat sleeves, onto our camera lenses. Yet despite the -35°C (-31°F) cold, we were hot, but our hands, faces, and camera mechanisms froze and this was most terrifying."[49]

Bunimovich and his colleagues turned to their resourcefulness to ensure the production of combat footage. They kept their cameras warm with their own bodies by placing them inside their

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[46] Fedor Vasil'chenko and Roman Karmen, "Frontline film report" ("Kinoreportazh na fronte"), *Pravda*, February 6, 1942, 3.
[47] See Dmitrii Lebedev and Aleksei Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera: Rasskazy frontovykh kinooperatorov* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1984), 57–58.
[48] From the remembrances of the documentary film director Il'ia Kopalin, TsGMK, fond 56, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 160.
[49] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 57–58.

coats and uniforms. “Before shooting footage laying there in the snow, we were forced to warm our cameras under our coats first.”[50] In winter 1942, cameraman V. Sokol’nikov, on assignment near Kaluga and Mozhaisk, had partisans place his camera under their coats for several minutes at a time to keep the spring mechanism inside from seizing up.[51]

Seasoned cameraman and filmmaker Sergei Dobronitskii found a more effective and ingenious solution against the cold. Dobronitskii had filmed during the Russian Civil War. Working on the North-Western Front in the winter of 1942, he came up with a lubricant, *smazka*, consisting of a mix of spiral compressor lubricating oil (*smazachnoe maslo KV*) and industrial spindle oil (*veretennoe maslo*), that could he applied to cameras. Dobronitskii not only convinced his entire film group to use the *smazka* in their cameras, but also persuaded Karmen to adopt the *smazka* while filming around Moscow in winter 1941–42. Karmen was so elated by the *smazka* solution that later at a meeting of film heads in May 1942, he raved to his colleagues about Dobronitskii’s ingenious idea. “If before at -10°C my camera froze in ten minutes, now even at -20°C my camera works like clockwork.” Karmen also mentioned that Dobronitskii had made his own viewfinder (*vizir*) for his telephoto lens (*televik*) that improved the quality of shots at long distances.[52]

Another important tactic adopted by frontline cameramen from the first year of the war that culminated with the Battle of Moscow was that in order to get the job done under the difficult circumstances they made sure to form unofficial bonds with local military commanders, units, and political administration personnel with whom they were embedded. Frontline cameramen created a symbiotic relationship with local personnel, the military, and the partisans. Local personnel were

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Vasil’chenko and Katsman, “Kinoreportazh na fronte,” 3.
[52] Taken from a Transcript of a meeting of heads of frontline filmmaking groups, May 12–13, 1942, RGALI, f. 1451, op. 1, d. 58, no page numbers provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 189.

willing to help frontline cameramen as they were eager to ensure that the work of cameramen not be derailed and because of the positive publicity afforded to them should sufficient quantities of quality footage be taken by frontline cameramen. The result was that a significant amount of supplies and logistical support for frontline filmmaking groups began to come from unofficial channels via local military, heads of film crews, and in some cases from partisan channels.[53]

When Valentin Orliankin could not repair his camera in winter of 1942, he turned to local military commanders who fixed the camera right in the field in less than a day. Frontline filmmaking groups even adopted the practice of paying the military for goods and services rendered, bypassing Moscow. Partisan units provided frontline cameramen with critical supplies, logistical support, and other assistance for the same reasons as the military.[54]

Heads of film groups, to preserve good relations with both central authorities and with frontline cameramen, periodically warned cameramen who relied on unofficial channels to benefit themselves personally or acted in an undisciplined fashion, reported the instances and their handling of them to Katsman and Vasil'chenko in Moscow and to the local head of *GlavPURKKA.* On February 1, 1942, Mark Troianovskii who was in charge of the filmmaking group on the Southern front, sent a memorandum to Vasil'chenko, Katsman, and commissar Mamonov (head of *GlavPURKKA* on the Southern front) claiming that close relations between cameramen, the military, and the political administration were leading to unabashed poor behavior and poor discipline amongst cameramen. "Many drink more than is recommended, supply themselves and dress themselves outside official channels. And most importantly (due to such close relations), their footage production potential decreases. These cameramen have surrounded themselves with goods, several cameramen's automobiles have turned into gypsy wagons, full of junk" and with

[53] See Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 126–28.
[54] Ibid., 159.

"trophy material, and gifts of a completely unacceptable nature." Troianovskii reported that he had ordered cameramen to remove all inappropriate items from automobiles save for a few necessary things for life and work in the field including reserves of cameras and film stock. He issued stern official warnings to the cameramen that self-aggrandizing, lax behavior, and a poor attitude towards their work had to stop or else severe punishments would follow.[55]

The problem of "lack of discipline" by cameramen was difficult to resolve though both for heads of film groups and central authorities in Moscow. For both, I would suggest, trying to deal head on with the "lack of discipline" and unofficial practices amongst camera groups was tricky probably because if they came down too hard, the production of combat footage could be put into jeopardy.

This is not to say that Moscow did not try to keep discipline in check amongst cameramen who strayed from the straight and narrow. However, the kind of remedies enacted showed that Moscow would only go so far in dealing with problematic cameramen and the special bonds developed by cameramen and local personnel. For instance, in December 1941, Mekhlis instructed the local divisions of *GlavPURKKA* with systematically conducting political-educational work amongst film groups to keep them in line, working properly, and keep discipline amongst those individuals who had problems with their character, or were poor in their work or judgment.[56]

[55] Memorandum from the head of the film group assigned to the Southern front Mark Troianaovskii to Vasil'chenko, February 1, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 107, l. 1–10, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 676.
[56] Directive from Mekhlis to the heads of political administration units serving on the frontline "About documentary footage being produced on the frontline of the Great Patriotic War," December 30, 1941, Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI), f. 17, op. 125, d. 71, l. 229–231, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 155.

Local heads of filmmaking groups walked a fine line between following orders and giving cameramen the flexibility to supply themselves at the frontline as they saw fit so long as footage was being produced. Instead, *Glavkinokhronika* targeted and removed leaders of film groups when a lack of discipline became a problem amongst frontline cameramen. For film administrators and the Party in Moscow, leaders of film groups were replaceable it seems, whereas good cameramen were needed to keep producing footage irrespective of whether the cameramen broke the rules. For example, on August 4, 1942, *Glavkinokhronika* circulated a letter to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups about the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs' decision to remove an individual by the last name of Azov, the deputy head of the filmmaking group on the Western front. Azov had been in charge of supplies and logistics for cameramen. He was found to have "systematically stolen items and distributed supplies unofficially to private individuals, not having any connection not only to the filmmaking group on the Western front, but to the army in general. Allowing the illegal distribution and taking of uniforms, he gave out cameramen supplies and dry goods without keeping any account and gave out unpermitted supplies." Additionally, he had given out supplies under the auspices and names of cameramen who had been reassigned to other fronts without any system of accounting. Via a military tribunal on the Western front, Azov was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and three years' loss of rights. [57]

The Unenviable Fate of Leningrad's Cameramen, Fall 1941 to Spring 1942

While Moscow was under siege in fall 1941, the city of Leningrad found itself surrounded by the Nazis and a blockade ensued, cutting Leningrad off from the rest of the Soviet Union.

[57] Letter circulated by *Glavkinokhronika* amongst the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, August 4, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 90, l. 21, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 682–83.

Residents now lived under incessant Nazi bombardment and the threat of invasion. The city's ability to supply its people with food, water, warmth, and fuel was severely tested.[58]

Yet the Leningrad documentary filmmaking studio continued to operate due to the sheer willpower of its personnel. To ensure the production of footage continued uninterrupted, local studio cameramen, editors, lighting crews, and drivers decided early on to live right at the studio where they worked. Cameramen also decided the best way to get around the city quickly and capture footage was to hitch rides with the city's fire brigades and the Soviet Air Defense Forces (*Voiska ProtivoVozdushnoi Oborony*) when emergency sirens rang out during the frequent air raids.[59]

The situation became even more desperate in the city. By November 20, the bread ration was lowered to 250 grams per day for workers and 125g for service personnel, children, and dependents. In December, the city was without heat, electricity, water, or lines of communication, as the phones went dead. The city faced a cold winter and starvation set in amongst its population.[60]

Weak from malnourishment, Leningrad's cameramen shot little footage and few films were being produced by the studio. Leningrad cameraman Ansel'm Bogorov, who was working in the city at the time, recalled how desperate the situation was: "It was reasonable to ask, what could we do now? The copying studio stopped working and we could not develop film anywhere." Yet Leningrad's cameramen continued to arrive at the studio for work. "Still those of us, who could move about, came to our small studio."[61]

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[58] Richard Overy, *Russia's War: A History of the Soviet War Effort: 1941-1945* (London: Penguin Books, 1998), 102-107.
[59] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 93–97.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

With public transport out of commission, Bogorov recalled resorting to walking to the studio and filming around the city on foot. For Bogorov, it took three hours to walk the ten kilometers to the studio from his apartment.[62] To walk such a distance daily and then film on foot carrying a film camera, extra film stock, and other supplies was an ordeal even under normal conditions. It was an excruciating ordeal in a city under siege.

The situation in Leningrad improved slightly in mid-December, with the "Road of Life"—the Red Army was transporting desperately needed food and other supplies across the frozen surface of Lake Ladoga into the city. By December 25, the ration of bread was increased by 100g for workers and by 75g for service personnel, dependents, and children. A part of the studio's filmmaking group now was able to film on the frontline in Leningrad region and on the Volkhov front, while another group remained in the city to film.[63]

Yet film administrators in Moscow expressed their frustration that insufficient amounts of quality footage, newsreels, and documentaries were being produced and arriving from Leningrad to Moscow via the "Road of Life." In letters sent repeatedly in winter 1942 from Katsman to Grigorii Khalipov, head of the Leningrad studio for documentary films, Katsman criticized the studio for doing a poor job and demanded that Khalipov do everything in his power to improve the situation. "The frontline film reporting being done is extremely lackluster," Katsman wrote, adding that "there are no good shots even of Leningrad itself." Katsman called on Leningrad's cameramen to sacrifice more for the country despite the hardships they were facing and to exhibit more heroism, like the city's residents, so they could be proud to say, "'here are the kinds of remarkable newsreels we are producing in these hard days. Here is the kind of remarkable footage

[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.

we are sending to Moscow.' Unfortunately, you cannot say this because your newsreels are weak."[64]

Katsman's criticisms, demands, and instructions were highly unfair given that the Leningrad studio and its cameramen worked under extraordinarily difficult blockade conditions. Leningrad's cameramen and studio personnel were taking great risks to capture footage of the city at war while facing severe illness, starvation, hypothermia, and daily bombardment. Anatolii Pogorelyi described his life and work in the city in winter 1942 in the following way: "No water. I filled my teapot with snow. Having cooked a pea concentrate, I drank some vodka (from my frontline reserves), I ate, covering myself with whatever I could, and with a heavy heart I fell asleep. The next day I asked for a camera, film stock, and got back to work—what kind of rest could there be at that time? I went out into the city with the camera. All around there were fires. At the Andreev market on Vasileev Island, I filmed people buying boiled belts made from raw leather and aspic made from table glue." By March 1942, Pogorelyi and his colleagues had taken the extraordinary initiative to set up a mobile film projector to exhibit newsreels portraying the city and region at war to the public which, according to Pogorelyi, "boosted morale immensely, strengthening a belief in victory amongst the people."[65]

Moreover, even with the "Road of Life," little additional supplies or personnel were forthcoming from Moscow to help the Leningrad documentary filmmaking studio in spite of the studio's pleas. The Soviet leadership it seems ignored Leningrad as it focused its best film resources and personnel on filming the defense of Moscow and launching a counter-offensive to push the Germans away from the capital. Only in early spring, after the Soviet leadership had

[64] Letter from Katsman to Khalipov, no exact day or month provided, winter 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 100, l. 17, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 178.
[65] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 100–01.

completed its first successful military campaign against the Nazis around Moscow and filmmakers had produced the full-length war-time documentary film, *Defeat of German-Fascist Troops Near Moscow* (*Razgrom nemetskikh voisk pod Moskvoi*, 1942), directed by Leonid Varlamov and Il'ia Kopalin, chronicling the counter-offensive in and around the capital,[66] did Bol'shakov finally turn his attention to providing critical resources and personnel to the Leningrad studio and its cameramen so they could produce footage for newsreels and a full-length documentary film about the city and the region at war.

On March 28, 1942, Bol'shakov informed Leningrad city committee secretary Shumilov that Karmen, along with a special group of seasoned cameramen who had been awarded the Stalin Prize and supplies, would be sent to the city via the "Road of Life" to help the Leningrad's cameramen acquire more dramatic footage of the city at war.[67] Katsman instructed Khalipov in Leningrad that Karmen and his film crew should be assisted in any way possible so that footage and a full-length documentary film could be produced as quickly as possible to show the Soviet public and the world that the city of Leningrad had not crumbled, had withstood the Nazis, and was defending itself bravely.[68]

The film project was now of such importance to the Party that Karmen and his film crew arrived at the Leningrad documentary film studio via the difficult "Road of Life" not just with basic foodstuffs, but with delicacies such as chocolate, sausage, canned goods, and even caviar.[69] By providing such scarce items and by sending the country's most renowned documentary filmmaker, on the one hand, the Party openly showed Leningrad's cameramen both the great

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[66] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 737.
[67] Telegram from Bol'shakov to Shumilov (no first name provided), March 28, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 100, l. 5, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 173.
[68] Letter from Katsman to Khalipov, March 28, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 100, l. 2–2ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 175.
[69] Konstantin Slavin, *Roman Karmen: Igraiu s ognem* (Moscow: Vsesoiuznoe tvorcheskoe ob'edinenie "Kinotsentr," 1989), 125–27.

symbolic importance of the film project and their significance to the project's successful completion. On the other hand, the Leningrad episode, I would suggest, must have also further laid bare to cameramen the brutal and political nature of decision-making in Moscow as to when and why certain cameramen received critical resources and attention while others did not.

Soviet Frontline Cameramen Defend Filming Footage of Reenacted Combat, Spring 1942

Beginning with the defense of Moscow, cameramen realized they faced a dilemma: wanting to keep themselves and their equipment safe even as film administrators and the Party instructed them to film real combat operations. As cameraman Izrael' Gol'dshtein recalled in a draft of his memoir, he and his colleagues had to learn to strike a balance between filming genuine and dramatic combat footage and their own safety. They had to keep in mind "where they should be in order to see everything and film, and yet, as much as possible, to protect their 'head' (*bashku*) and their camera."[70]

In reality, there was little possibility of finding a balance between the two, particularly when so few had powerful zoom lenses on hand. No Soviet zoom or telephoto lenses were produced by the Soviet Union either before or during the war. At a meeting of heads of frontline filmmaking groups May 12–13, 1942, Karmen raised the point that the Soviets were not producing telephoto lenses: "Until now no one has been accountable for tele-optics and none are in use." Karmen explained that their filming of combat footage was done without powerful zoom or telephoto lenses.[71]

[70] Israel' Gol'dshtein, unpublished memoir, part of the personal collection of Izrael' Gol'dshtein, 1941–1945, held by his nephew and provided to me courtesy of his nephew, 4.
[71] Transcript of a meeting of heads of frontline filmmaking groups, May 12–13, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 58, no pages provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 189.

Soviet military commanders did have telescopic ocular equipment to help view and assess the field of battle. Cameramen who were embedded with military units were fully aware of the military telescopes, impressed with their capabilities, and also disappointed that they did not have such optics for their work in the field. The case of the cameraman Dmitrii Rymarev being shown such a military telescope by a battery commander illustrates this point well. Rymarev looked into the lens and was astonished by what he was able to see. He told the commander, "It is so tragic that we do not have such equipment. If I could film such a scene, I would be carried around the studio."[72]

Early on in the war, a number of Soviet frontline cameramen decided the way out of their predicament was to film "reenacted scenes" (*instsenirovki)* of combat operations and fighting. If done in a limited fashion, as an addition to mostly genuine combat footage, the Party and film administrators tolerated the practice. Yet, the practice quickly became too routine and egregious for Party and film administrators to accept. In the spring of 1942, Katsman and Bol'shakov came down severely on camera crews for resorting to the practice too often, saying that the reenacted combat footage was becoming too obvious, repetitive, and even boring. Katsman and Bol'shakov became increasingly concerned that domestic and international audiences would recognize the footage as being reenacted. On April 27, 1942, Katsman sent a scathing letter about the practice of staging combat footage to documentary filmmaker A. Sadetskii, who was responsible for the group of cameramen filming on the Crimean front. Katsman lashed out at Sadetskii and his cameramen for producing combat footage "completely lacking the genuine atmosphere of war." Katsman instructed Sadetskii to demand that his cameramen film real combat episodes first, only adding limited amounts of reenacted footage of good quality later. Asking a military commander

[72] Dmitrii Rymarev, *Dni shtormovye: zapiski frontovogo kinooperatora* (Moscow: Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR, Biuro propagandy sovetskogo kinoiskusstva, 1975), 30–31.

to crawl on the ground to make it look like cameramen had filmed real fighting on the Crimean front was completely unacceptable, according to Katsman, because "it turned out fake, unacceptably fake."[73]

A series of heated exchanges took place between the heads of frontline filmmaking groups and film administrators from May 12–13, 1942 over whether, to what extent, and what kinds of reenactment should be tolerated. The meetings were attended by such well known individuals of the time as Mikhail Slutskii (a veteran filmmaker at the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking), Katsman, Bol'shakov, Karmen, Mar'iana Fideleva (a documentary-filmmaker), Ilia Kopalin, and Troianovskii. The discussions revealed a divide between Bol'shakov and Katsman, who were against reenactment of all kinds, and documentary cameramen and filmmakers, who for the most part defended the practice. Karmen argued that the bulk of combat footage produced by cameramen should be real with additions of reenacted footage. Seasoned documentary filmmaker Slutskii defended reenactment if it was a supplement to genuine and real footage and if it was done in a convincing manner. According Slutskii, what mattered most to audiences was that footage was dramatic and believable, not whether it was always real. "What is important is the kind of impression a film or scene makes on the viewer. If a viewer becomes engrossed in what they are seeing on the screen, if one feels and believes it, then the film is successful."[74]

Katsman strongly disagreed, arguing that audiences routinely recognized the falsehood in reenacted combat footage. Slutskii fired back that Soviet newsreels and full-length films that contained real combat footage often turned out to be boring and lacking in emotional resonance.

[73] Letter from Katsman to Sadetskii, April 27, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 99, no pages provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 338.
[74] Transcript of a meeting of heads of frontline filmmaking groups, May 12–13, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 58, no pages provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 339, 342.

Slutskii openly blasted Katsman and others who only demanded genuine combat footage. "One cannot make it a law that only genuine footage be shot—let's not lie to ourselves." [75]

Bol'shakov came to the defense of Katsman: "We must strongly state that footage must be genuine and dramatic. We must decisively reject all reenactment, despite the fact that comrade Slutskii has defended it here." Bol'shakov went on to explain his reasoning; according to him, it was the Soviet Union's real and genuine footage of events which separated it from the false war footage of the imperialist powers. He continued that Soviet films were "so popular amongst our viewers and viewers abroad" precisely because they were based on real combat footage.[76]

Bol'shakov's claims that Soviet films were popular abroad because they were made up of real combat footage cannot be corroborated by articles or archival sources from the time that discuss the war footage included in Soviet newsreels and documentaries. Instead, I would venture to suggest Bol'shakov's critical attitude to the reenactment of combat spoke more about his and Katsman's priorities. For Bol'shakov and Katsman, it was Party orders and their own positions as film administrators that mattered most, rather than the safety of frontline cameramen.

Interestingly, in the same meeting, Karmen agreed with Katsman and Bol'shakov in principal that he preferred genuine combat footage. But Karmen also made it clear that cameramen faced a dilemma. If they only shot genuine combat footage, it placed them in great danger of being shot, wounded, or hit by shrapnel. Therefore, in order for cameramen to safeguard their lives, genuine combat footage had to be augmented with reenacted footage. Another cameraman, Kopalin sided with Karmen and also added that reenacted footage should be viewed as an addition to genuine footage, which should be the majority of footage shot, and not the other way around.

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[75] Ibid., 342

[76] Transcript of the meeting of heads of frontline film groups, May 12–13, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 58, d. 44, no original page numbers provided, as reprinted in *Kinovedcheskie zapiski*, 7 (2004): 291.

He cited *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces Near Moscow* and the documentary films *Khalkhin-Gol* (1940), directed by Kopalin and *Glory to the heroes of Khasan* (*Slava geroiam Khasana*, 1938), also directed by Kopalin, as examples of films that according to him were based on genuine footage with supplemental reenacted footage.[77]

The meeting must have revealed to frontline cameramen and filmmakers that Bol'shakov and Katsman were not listening to them or understanding their predicament. Yet, as we shall see, neither Bol'shakov, Katsman, or other central authorities were eager to remove or punish cameramen for staging combat footage, as they also feared derailing the production of war-time combat footage for newsreels and full-length documentaries.

The Staging of Combat Takes on "Epic" Proportions in the Hell of Stalingrad, Summer to Fall 1942

In summer of 1942, German forces advanced in the south taking Rostov and reaching the outskirts of Stalingrad. By late August, Stalingrad was under constant German bombardment and was swept by fire. In September, hand to hand combat and street battles erupted between German and Soviet forces in the city. Much of Soviet military operations took place either under the cover of night in narrow streets between buildings. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers from both sides were being killed.[78]

A large camera crew worked outside the city and two cameramen within the city of Stalingrad itself. Both groups faced the impossible task of shooting genuine combat footage as in instructed by film administrators in a horrific environment. Orliankin, one of the two cameramen

[77] Transcript of a meeting of heads of frontline filmmaking groups, May 12–13, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 58, no pages provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 342, 344.
[78] Overy, *Russia's War*, 165-175

filming within Stalingrad, tried to explain to film administrators the conditions the cameramen were working under to make them better understand the cameramen's predicament. In his dope sheet (a report of the contents of exposed film that cameramen were required to send to *Glavkinokhronika*) from the end of September 1942, Orliankin put in plain words how difficult it was to film the kind of footage at Stalingrad that the Party demanded:

> Of course, I wanted to film running and falling Germans, but this turned out to be a difficult and almost impossible thing to do: I couldn't make out the Germans. Unceasing bombardment, unending gunfire, and whistling bullets from German gunners did not give me the opportunity to film any kind of complete scene (maybe because of how tense the fighting was, maybe because of insufficient experience with producing such footage), therefore I shot separate pieces of the battle, choosing the most characteristic shots for the time.[79]

Writing to Lewis Milestone (Lev Mil'shtein), a prominent American-Jewish filmmaker of Moldovan birth, Soviet cameraman Krichevskii described his and his colleagues' difficulty in filming combat scenes at Stalingrad: "There were times when we kept watch for hours inside some kind of ruins, you finally turn on your camera and except for grey scenes and barely noticeable smoke, you could not see anything. And yet, we were filming German positions, risking our lives."[80]

Meanwhile, as some cameramen tried to film real combat footage at Stalingrad, risking their lives in the process, film administrators were discarding or shelving a great deal of the footage for its poor clarity and dull nature and reporting to cameramen and heads of films crews that the

[79] Dope sheet of Orliankin, September 28–29, 1942, no archival information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 235.
[80] Letter from Krichevskii to Milestone, no day or month provided, TsGMK, f. 14, no other information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 259.

combat footage was not dramatic or clear.[81] "The footage does not satisfy us either in its form, or its content."[82]

Katsman grew alarmed that the official full-length documentary that would tell the world the story of the Soviet's epic and historic military struggle and victory against Fascism at Stalingrad would not contain enough dramatic and epic combat footage and that the film itself might be delayed in its release. By October 1942, Katsman along with Popov, an editor and reviewer in Moscow who worked together with Katsman to comment on film footage coming in from the front, were sending scathing reviews to Aleksandr Kuznetsov, the head of the filmmaking group stationed in and around Stalingrad, clearly indicating that they were dissatisfied with the footage being produced and sent to Moscow.[83] Kuznetsov shot back at Katsman and Popov, defending his cameramen and arguing that it was instead a shortage of film stock was severely limiting cameramen in the volume and quality of combat footage they were producing. In a letter from Kuznetsov to Katsman, Kuznetsov explained that the situation was "inexcusable, unbelievable, when such events were underway."[84]

By November of 1942, Vasil'chenko was so alarmed by the volume of reenacted combat footage produced by cameramen not only at Stalingrad, but along the entire frontline that he issued

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[81] See, for example, the concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about the footage for the story "Infantry Takes up Position" produced by the cameraman Boris Shadronov on the South-Western front, no exact date provided, sometime in late summer or early fall of 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 103, no exact page provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 235, and the concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about the footage for the stories "Until the Last Bullet" and "Tank attack," no date provided, but likely sometime in late summer or early fall of 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 103, no exact page number provided, as reprinted in ibid., 234.

[82] Concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about the footage produced by Orliankin at Stalingrad for the story "Stalingrad in these Days," October 14, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 103, no page number provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 238.

[83] Concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about footage intended for the topics "Until the Last Bullet" and "Tank Ambush," no exact date provided, sometime in fall 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 103, no page number provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 234 and concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about the footage produced by the film group on the Stalingrad front for the topic "Stalingrad Today," October 21, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 78, l. 7–8ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 241–44.

[84] Letter from Kusnetsov to Katsman, October 19, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 103, l. 14, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 232.

a directive to all frontline filmmaking groups and cameraman that the practice was rampant and instructed cameramen to film real combat operations instead. "Recently a number of frontline film cameramen instead of filming genuine combat film reportage from the fronts of the Great Patriotic War, have become enthusiastic for so called 'organized' material, which in the majority of cases leads to a primitive form of reenactment." Vasil'chenko made clear that "the filming and submitting of such footage must stop immediately, that all necessary measures be taken so that cameramen film dramatic and high-quality film reportage at the front, resorting to so called 'organized' material only in those instances when it is needed as a supplement to real frontline footage being shot."[85]

In December, Katsman pushed frontline filmmaking groups to film as much real and dramatic combat footage as possible "reflecting the breadth of the large-scale military operations underway at Stalingrad." He concluded by instructing cameramen to "pay special attention to provide multifaceted footage of combat operations along the main lines of attack against German forces."[86]

With the Red Army finally gaining the upper hand at Stalingrad in December 1942,[87] Soviet frontline cameramen turned to filming the reenactment of fighting. They staged battle scenes that had already taken place which, for one reason or another, had not been filmed, not filmed sufficiently or had been deemed by film administrators as being of poor quality. Examples included cameramen reenacting scenes of Soviet snipers taking aim and killing German soldiers,[88]

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[85] Directive from Vasil'chenko to all frontline filmmaking groups, November 8, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, no opis' provided, d. 90, l. 32, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 193.
[86] Concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about the work of the filmmaking group at the Stalingrad front from October–December 16, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 78, l. 38–40ob, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 249, 252.
[87] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 139-141.
[88] Concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about footage for the story "Friends-Hunters," January 3, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 126, l. 1, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 361.

who must have been acted by Soviet soldiers dressed in German uniforms taken from dead or captured German soldiers, and footage claiming to show Soviet soldiers "in a real gun battle with the enemy, who does not even notice that he is being 'hit' (*biut*) by cameramen directly fixing their cameras" on the enemy.[89]

Both Katsman and Vasil'chenko again repeatedly threatened cameramen with removal and punishment for not following orders[90] but did not follow through. Instead, it was the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, headed by Bol'shakov, which singled out individual cameramen to serve as an example for all. On January 29, 1943, Bol'shakov in his annual review of the work of the country's frontline filmmaking efforts for 1942 sent to all frontline filmmaking groups, where he hailed a number of cameramen for their exemplary work, courage, initiative, and artistry, Bol'shakov also targeted two cameramen to be removed from working as frontline cameramen and fired them from documentary filmmaking "for not supplying sufficient quality work:" Lev Grotskii and Sergei Avloshenko." Bol'shakov also issued a stern warning to four other cameramen to immediately improve the quality of their footage. [91]

The most likely reasons neither Katsman nor Vasil'chenko punished or reprimanded cameramen was either they did not have the power to do so or did not want to take on the responsibility. Bol'shakov for his part, by only singling out a few individuals to serve as examples, I would suggest wanted to satisfy Party leaders who were more interested in footage,

[89] Concluding remarks by *Glavkinokhronika* about footage for the story "Direct Guidance," December 9, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, no opis' provided, d. 80, no page provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 360.
[90] Refer for example to the directive from Vasil'chenko about forbidding cameramen from organizing reenacted combat scenes, November 8, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, no opis' provided, d. 90, l. 32, as reprinted in ibid., 360–61. See also, for instance, the concluding remarks made by Katsman about the footage for the stories "Infantry Is Occupying the Frontiers," "On the Edge of the Forest," and others, no day or month provided, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 103, no page provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 235.
[91] Order of the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs "About the Work of Frontline Cameramen," January 29, 1943, NIIK, fond V. P. Mikhailov, no other archival information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 363.

documentaries, and newsreels and not the details of how to administer cameramen or under what conditions footage was produced.

Meanwhile, most cameramen continued to ignore the orders of Katsman and Vasil'chenko for genuine combat footage and routinely staged and reenacted combat scenes. The decision of cameramen to further break with Vasil'chenko and Katsman on the issue of reenactment at Stalingrad would pay off when the final full-length documentary film about Stalingrad appeared and was greeted warmly by critics at home and abroad. The film and its combat footage was recognized domestically and abroad by the press as a historic achievement and true rendition of the epic struggle that had taken place between Soviet and German forces around Stalingrad.[92]

In fact, on March 19, 1943, Stalin awarded dozens of filmmakers and cameramen who had produced memorable and dramatic footage at Stalingrad and on the frontline in general in 1942 with the country' highest honor, the Stalin Prize. The financial bonuses awarded were lavish: 100,000 rubles for the First Order Stalin Prize and 50,000 for the Second Order Stalin Prize to be divided amongst each group.[93] For Soviet frontline cameramen, the warm reception given to their efforts by the Party and the domestic and international press, must have provided further proof to them that their practice of filming reenacted combat scenes, though running contrary to the orders of film administrators, was not only logistically necessary but also persuasive. As I will show later in the chapter, censors and editors in Moscow would also finally come to agree with frontline cameramen and warm up to the practice of reenactment.

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[92] See, for example, T.S., "The City that Stopped Hitler—Heroic Stalingrad," and Aleksei Tolstoi, "Stalingrad," *Pravda*, March 10, 1943, 3.

[93] Directive by the Council of People's Commissars about the awarding of the Stalin Prize of the USSR for 1942, March 19, 1943, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 834, no exact page number provided, as reprinted in Deriabin, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 762.

Setback at Khar'kov, Cameramen Openly Criticize Superiors: Winter 1942–43

Stalin expected Soviet forces to quickly sweep into Ukraine following the victory at Stalingrad. However, the Red Army found it extremely difficult to advance against the Germans in the Donbas region in winter 1942–43 as the Germans retook the initiative and pushed the Red Army back to retake Khar'kov. Thousands of Red Army soldiers were killed and captured and the Soviet advance was stalled. It was an embarrassing and shocking defeat.[94]

The Soviet camera crew in the region of Khar'kov sent to film the Red Army's advance was caught up in the chaos, facing extreme danger, confusion, and isolation from Moscow. Eshurin, the lead cameraman of the film crew, pointed out the failures of Moscow to properly administer and supply his cameramen and requested changes in how cameramen should be administered, supplied, and instructed during the war. In a report to Vasil'chenko dated April 13, 1943, Eshurin lashed out at his superiors for their ignorance and ineptitude and blamed them directly for poor administration and mismanagement of his film crew.[95]

According to Eshurin, his film crew had missed the main military operations in the area in November due to a lack of transportation and supplies. Eshurin described how the situation had become so dire in terms of supply shortages that his cameramen had to routinely catch rides from other military personnel, sometimes on horseback and even on foot, all the while facing bitter cold and winds in open spaces, desperately short of uniforms, warm clothing, and other basic supplies. Two cameramen fell ill. One was sent to Moscow for treatment for an unidentified disease. A second came down with tularemia, a highly infectious and potentially fatal bacterial infection passed through the bite of an infected insect. The cameraman was out of commission for one

[94] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 144-147.
[95] Report by Eshurin about the work of his film group on the South-Western front for December 1942–March 1943, April 13, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 118, l. 5–7, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 163–65.

month. Eshurin himself was wounded twice, first in December when he suffered a severe concussion from a mine that went off near him, and a second time when enemy tanks surrounded a military unit with which he was assigned.[96]

Eshurin sent ten telegrams to *Glavkinokhronika* insisting that warmer clothing and uniforms be provided as soon as possible and attached a list of what the group needed. He also sent four telegrams to *Glavkinokhronika* about the group desperately needing additional funds, although no funds were sent. Eshurin also requested that Moscow send additional cameramen to replenish his ranks. Yet according to Eshurin it was not until February of 1943 that his film group received four more cameramen.[97]

During a spring meeting of heads of film groups held in April 1943 at *Glavkinokhronika* in Moscow, Eshurin criticized *Glavkinokhronika's* leadership again for the plight of his and other film crews working in the Soviet Union: "I must point the finger at our leadership." Eshurin brought up specific administrative problems that continued to plague film groups since the start of the war. Frontline cameramen were not officially assigned to the military units they were attached to, which severely compromised their ability to work and film. "It is absolutely not normal, the conditions under which the film groups operate at the front. They are, if I can say so, like 'relatives' who one accepts, but for whom one cannot do anything…"[98]

Eshurin contrasted the confused situation of Soviet cameramen with British cameramen, who were officially military personnel, which made their jobs that much easier. He cited British documentaries, such as the full-length documentary *Desert Victory* (1943), produced by the British Ministry of Information and directed by Roy Boulting, as being exemplary because British

[96] Ibid., 163–64.
[97] Ibid., 163–65.
[98] Transcript of a meeting of the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, April 15–16, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 110, l. 8–10.

cameramen worked under administrative conditions that were far better than those that the Soviet Union provided to its cameramen and film units at the front.[99]

He pleaded with Soviet leaders and film administrators to improve matters by making cameramen officially part of the Red Army so that they would be supplied directly by the military instead of waiting for supplies and instructions from Moscow.[100] Though Eshurin's request was not granted at the time, a few months later, in summer of 1943, Moscow would introduce a partial decentralization of administrative power and control away from Moscow to *GlavPURKKA* and the military to administer frontline cameramen.

A Decentralization of Power Yet Continued Reenactment of Combat by Cameramen, Summer to Fall 1943

In summer of 1943, the Red Army retook Kursk and Orel and advanced into Ukraine.[101] Ukraine was the Soviet Union's second most populous republic. It was the country's breadbasket. But its allegiance was in question. The Ukrainian population had been under German occupation and propaganda since the start of the war and Western areas of Ukraine had been only recently forcibly annexed to the Soviet Union before the war. Ukraine had suffered greatly under Soviet power during the collectivization campaigns of the 1930s that had led to mass starvation and tens of millions of Ukrainians dead. Presenting Soviet propaganda to the Ukrainian population as soon as possible would help to "re-Sovietize" the population.[102]

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[99] Ibid., 10.
[100] Report by Eshurin about the work of his film group on the South-Western front for December 1942–March 1943, April 23, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 118, l. 5–7, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 165.
[101] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 160-171.
[102] See Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), for in depth discussion of Soviet concerns with "re-Sovietizing" Ukraine during the war.

Meanwhile, on August 19, 1943, Shcherbakov called for delegating more power to local *GlavPURKKA* chiefs to share responsibility with Moscow for the welfare of frontline cameramen. He instructed the local *GlavPURKKA* heads to pay more attention to the transportation, fuel, communications, and supplies of frontline filmmaking groups and have more regular contact and communication with the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs to ensure cameramen were getting what they needed and that frontline footage was being sent to Moscow in a timely manner. He called on local *GlavPURKKA* personnel to get involved with managing the day-to-day affairs of frontline filmmaking groups and report to the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs about the work being done. Finally, Shcherbakov stressed to the local *GlavPURKKA* chiefs that frontline filmmaking groups should be assisted in any way possible so that they might produce less footage of "organized" combat.[103]

To get the local military personnel more involved, Shcherbakov instructed military councils to systematically review the plans and instructions coming from the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs to be sent to frontline filmmaking groups. Military councils would then be able to help Bol'shakov with making sure cameramen would and could achieve their goals. Shcherbakov also called on local military councils to provide "all necessary assistance" to achieve the Committee's plans and instructions.[104]

Shcherbakov's reforms amounted to a tacit and partial decentralization of power away from central authorities in Moscow to local military councils and local personnel of *GlavPURKKA*. His decision to delegate more power away from Moscow showed that the Party leadership and

[103] See the directive sent by Shcherbakov to the members of military councils and heads of *GlavPURKKA*, demanding they assist in any way possible frontline filmmaking groups and follow all instructions and assist with all orders coming from the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs, August 19, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 112, l. 5–6, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na Voine*, 169.
[104] Ibid.

Bol'shakov were now (grudgingly) listening to and acting upon cameramen's criticisms and needs and recognized that the official centralized system of administration needed to be augmented. The catalyst for the changes, I would suggest, was the Party's desire for cameramen to produce copious amounts of genuine war footage in a timely manner of the Red Army's "liberation" of Ukraine.

Yet, despite a partial decentralization of power, frontline cameramen continued the practice of filming combat reenactment. Film editors in Moscow responsible for reviewing frontline war footage expressed their alarm about the practice. In a letter of alarm to the heads of the country's frontline filmmaking groups and to frontline cameramen in late summer 1943, the chief editor for frontline newsreel filmmaking in Moscow, Karavkin, criticized Soviet cameramen for filming days after military battles and operations along the Dnepr had already taken place. He made the point that reenacted combat was unacceptable because it compromised the dramatic quality of footage. He called on frontline filmmaking groups to immediately cease filming reenacted combat and instead film both preparations before military maneuvers and battles and, more importantly, to film real combat during actual military operations and battles.[105]

Karavkin provided a detailed list explaining what cameramen needed to do to improve the situation. First, frontline filmmaking groups had to improve their maneuverability—be at various parts of the front when key actions, maneuvers, and battles took place. He called on cameramen to keep up with the advancing Red Army and not repeat the mistakes during the Red Army's forcing of the Dnepr and at the battle of Smolensk, when events were not captured on film as they were happening. Second, he called for the production of a greater variety of combat footage that was more emotional than what had been routinely produced. Third, he called for filming both the positives and negatives of the war—victories as well as the suffering of soldiers in combat. Fourth,

[105] Letter from Karavkin to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, sometime in the summer of 1943, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 63/17, l. 1, 3.

Karavkin called for filming soldiers up-close in combat instead of from far-away during key battles and maneuvers as the Red Army advanced. This would make the footage more emotional to audiences and capture more the essence and drama of the moment. Karavkin argued that Soviet audiences demanded such kinds of up-close and intimate footage of soldiers in combat because they wanted to see their loved ones and friends in such footage. Most frontline footage, he complained, was shot at a medium distance from soldiers. In his conclusion, Karavkin called on cameramen and heads of groups again to film only genuine war footage because of the historic significance of what they were producing.[106]

Yet, again, many of Karavkin's requests regarding filming of combat footage were ignored by cameramen as they were unreasonable, even impossible, to fulfill. Red Army attempts at crossings and the establishment of bridgeheads across the Dnepr often occurred at night and under heavy gunfire from German soldiers. On October 5, 1943, along with exposed footage, Eshurin sent to *Glavkinokhronika* a dope sheet in which he explained that field conditions for him and his colleagues along the Dnepr limited what they could film: "The entire process of crossing the river takes place only at night, because the enemy is on the alert for an attempt to cross and unleashes a heavy volley of gunfire; therefore, I filmed only what was possible."[107] As cameraman Georgii Rodnichenko informed *Glavkinokhronika* in an addendum to his dope sheet sent along with his exposed footage from September 28, 1943, it was very difficult and dangerous to film during the day along the Dnepr since the Germans noticed Soviet cameramen filming across the river and opened fire at them: "The most difficult shots were panorama shots of the city and the Dnepr River, since I was filming from a higher elevation and the Germans could spot me and spray me with

[106] Ibid., 5.
[107] Eshurin dope sheet "On the right bank," October 5, 1943, the provenance of the source is unknown, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 582.

bullets." But he added that "filming from river level, it was difficult to show the Dnepr. […] Many times I would creep up to the shore of the river, but was noticed and sprayed with bullets."[108]

Heavy Alcohol Consumption and Dereliction of Duty by Cameramen, Fall and Winter 1943

Further complicating an already challenging situation for cameramen in filming combat footage was the fact that, as the Red Army swept into Belorussia and Ukraine in the fall of 1943, they were increasingly exposed to the mass slaughter and devastation caused by the Germans on Soviet territory, including concentration camps designed to exterminate entire peoples. Soviet frontline cameramen had been receiving specific instructions from the Party and film administrators to film the destruction, atrocities, concentration camps, and horrors since November 2, 1941 when the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet established the Extraordinary State Commission (*Chrezvychainaia Gosudarstvennaia Kommissiia*, ChGK) for the Investigation of the Crimes Committed by the German-Fascist Invaders and their Accomplices and the Damage Inflicted by Them.[109]

As the Red Army advanced across Ukraine and Belorussia Soviet frontline cameramen came face to face with the true nature and scale of the Nazis' mass murder campaign. The scenes cameramen witnessed and filmed shook them to their core. And with so much of the Germans' mass murder campaign aimed at the Jews, Soviet frontline cameramen of Jewish descent must have especially been affected.[110] Cameraman Vladimir Tomberg recalled in his memoir the shock of seeing the bodies of people murdered by the Nazis being exhumed from abandoned mine shafts

[108] Additional comments to a dope sheet provided by Rodnichenko, September 28, 1943, the provenance of the source is unknown, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 580–81.
[109] See Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust*, 17 and 64.
[110] A disproportionate number of Soviet cameramen were Jews.

near the city of Stalino, Ukraine (now Donetsk) in September 1943 for identification by families and loved ones:

> From a gangway via a vertical shaft they were raising in a large pail the remains of local residents who had been tortured and gunned down. These victims, it seemed, were from the first days of the fascist occupation, which went on in the Donbass for more than two years. The clothing on the bodies had deteriorated, the rags barely covering them. Cheekbones were covered by flaccid, in parts torn, skin, eye sockets were deeply sunken, and not all of the bodies had their extremities intact. I was shaken by the horrific scene.
>
> The mutilated bodies were carefully placed upon the snow. City and village residents had gathered around: mainly emaciated elderly women. With their heads down, silently, they moved around or stood in place, tensely staring at the remains. Many had tears streaming down their faces, but it was if the women did not notice the tears. It was difficult to make out anyone amongst the bodies, seemingly impossible, with the bodies of the victims being so mutilated.
>
> While I filmed another victim being raised from the mine shaft, a desperate, heart-rending scream rang out. By some sign only she could understand, a mother recognized her son. A deteriorated body in rags lay on the snow. But for the mother, it was her flesh and blood, and she rushed forward, fell to her knees, clasping his only foot in tears. He was missing his second foot…
>
> To witness such a tragic scene was unbelievably hard.[111]

[111] Vladimir Tomberg, *V tylu i na fronte: Vospominaniia frontovogo operatora* (Moscow: Eisenstein Center, 2003), 165–67.

Frontline cameramen turned to alcohol to cope with the horrid realities of their work and the conditions in which they now found themselves. In doing so, Soviet frontline cameramen adopted the same coping mechanism that Soviet soldiers had turned to since the start of the war.[112] In fact, frontline cameramen turned to any form of alcohol they could get their hands on, since vodka and even moonshine were often either too expensive or in short supply. The alternatives, though, such as industrial ether, were highly potent, addictive, and dangerous.

The head of the Belorussian front film group, by the last name of Karavaev, in a memorandum to Vasil'chenko on December 6, 1943, reported about "a most undisciplined" cameraman who was drunk for days following terrible scenes he had witnessed and filmed of atrocities in Gomel' and the loss of a colleague killed while filming. In his report, Karavaev explained that the cameraman David Ibragimov had been supplied by a colleague with ether (a type of industrial alcohol produced as part of the film stock production process) from the Shostka film factory, which he had hidden. For days on end, Ibragimov roamed intoxicated, acting rudely to his colleagues, refusing to do his share of the work, or bury the body of cameraman Malov who had died after encountering a mine. As Karavaev explained, "he wanted nothing to do with the body as he needed a respite after filming in Gomel'."[113]

For their part, neither the Party or film administrators punished many cameramen for heavy drinking. Instead, heads of film crews and film administrators only paid lip-service to threats of punishment. Sometime in 1944, Troianovskii revealed that, with the permission of a director by the last name of Avdeenko, cameraman Orliankin and his driver had drunk a bottle of trophy ether spirit, from which they had gotten alcohol poisoning. Due to Orliankin and the driver being sick

[112] For excellent illustrations of alcohol abuse amongst Red Army soldiers early on in the war, see Grossman's descriptions in Beevor and Vinogradova, *Vasily Grossman*, 74.
[113] Memorandum from Karavaev to Vasil'chenko, December 6, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 118, l. 79–82, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 698–99.

for two weeks, the group was delayed in filming around Kiev during intense combat operations. Orliankin and Avdeenko were reprimanded by Troianovskii for their behavior before their colleagues, and cameramen in general were again warned that the abuse of alcohol "was seen as a very serious break of discipline and that those accused would undergo the strictest of punishment."[114]

Neither Orliankin nor Avdeenko were relieved of their duties by either film administrators or the Party. Both Orliankin and Avdeenko were decorated and seasoned cameramen. To remove two exemplary cameramen for heavy drinking it seems did not make sense to either the Party or film administrators when there was simply too much work to be done and too little time in terms of recording as much German destruction and mass murder on film as possible and capturing the last stages of the war as the Red Army swept across Ukraine and Belorussia towards Europe. So, long as cameramen continued to produce dramatic footage heavy bouts of drinking would be tolerated it seems.

Meanwhile, Soviet cameramen were now "leaving" (*pokidali*) the front in droves without proper paper work and even without permission for extended periods of time, for weeks on end. Superiors at *Glavkinokhronika* and elsewhere had been aware of such sojourns early on in the war and tried to introduce measures to stem the practice. Cameramen were warned repeatedly of severe punishment for travelling for long periods without permission and a few were removed from their duties.[115]

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[114] Order signed by Troianovskii "about the undisciplined nature of the director Avdeenko and cameraman Orliankin," no exact date or month provided, 1944, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 190, l. 9, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 704.

[115] See, for example, a report from Fedor Kiselev, the head of the film group on the Central front, to Vasil'chenko, September 28, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 118, l. 72–72ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 696–97; and a memorandum from the head of the filmmaking group on the Kalinin front F. Filia, October 7, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 118, l. 73, in ibid., 697–98.

Yet, most were simply threatened with punishment by film heads without any action taken, in all likelihood again due to the need for footage by Moscow. Instead, in 1943, Bol'shakov recommended to Shcherbakov that the families of cameramen be provided with more generous benefits so that cameramen might worry less about their well–being during the war and not travel quite so frequently to assist them.[116] However, cameramen travelled not only to help family members financially, but to visit family and friends whom they had not seen in months, to take a break from the front, to fix damaged cameras, and pick up much needed supplies such as medicine, food, and clothing. They were gone for long periods also because it took time to get to and from the front back to their families and friends in the rear due to poor transport and a scarcity of fuel. I would suggest that they also did not want to wait for permission papers that took weeks, if not months, to be issued due to Soviet red tape, exacerbated by war-time conditions. Finally, I would suggest that cameramen now were leaving the front for extended periods of time as a form of needed respite from the extreme nature of their work filming Nazi atrocities and destruction.

Film Editors Ally with War Cameramen on the Issue of Reenactment, Spring 1944

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1944, film editors in Moscow were alarmed that they still did not have enough high-quality combat footage of the Red Army's advance through Ukraine. Wanting to make sure that the Party's schedule for a full-length documentary about the liberation of Ukraine not be derailed, editors took the initiative to instruct cameramen to "organize shots" (*materialy organizovat'*), that is, to film "reenacted scenes" (*instsenirovki*), thereby officially sanctioning finally a practice cameramen had been relying on since the Battle of Moscow.

[116] Memorandum from Bol'shakov to Shcherbakov about improving the work conditions in the sphere of war-time documentary filmmaking, no day or month provided, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 111, l. 12–14, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 168.

On May 11, 1944, chief editor of documentary films Boris Agapov wrote an urgent letter to cameraman Aleksei Lebedev and sent a copy to *Glavkinokhronika* requesting that footage be "organized" to ensure the Red Army's victorious operations be documented for a second full-length documentary about the liberation of Ukraine. Agapov made clear that there simply was not enough dramatic footage portraying the strength of the Red Army advancing in battle for the film: "The material we have on hand is insufficient either in its quantity or in its nature." Agapov proposed creating a group consisting of three cameramen, a director, and a manager sent under special orders of *Glavkinokhronika*, the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, and the local military command to film "large-scale shots" (*massovye s'emki*) according to the director's own choice of location and at sites where major battle operations had taken place. Agapov declared his proposal was the only way out of the situation, with most large-scale military operations having already ended and only four cameramen filming material for current newsreels in Ukraine. According to Agapov, "no other methods exist to 'arm' (*vooruzhit'*) the film with episodes of impressive fighting."[117]

Pouring over Soviet cameramen's reenacted footage of the Red Army's advances and victories in Ukraine over the summer of 1944 would be none other than Soviet Ukrainian filmmaker Aleksandr Dovzhenko. Dovzhenko was in charge of producing the documentaries about Ukraine in war based off of the combat footage shot by cameramen. To protect himself before the Party and film administrators during a general meeting of the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking on August 28, 1944, he lashed out at frontline cameramen for having produced such poor footage of the Red Army liberating Ukraine that he and film groups had to resort to reenactment. "There was no advance across the Dnepr in all of the material, and the campaign was

[117] Letter from Agapov to Lebedev about the necessity of staging footage (*instsenirovki*) of large scale advances, May 11, 1944, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 719, l. 17, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 370.

not caught on film, so we had to take up the practice of reenacting the episode. If we take into account all of our concern and wariness when it comes to reenactment, especially poor examples of it, you will understand my feelings, with which I am forced to speak about such reenacting." He accused cameramen of preferring to keep a safe distance from fighting when the Red Army was crossing the Dnepr in Ukraine: "I have to assume that cameramen want to live too much, more than is the duty of an officer at the front."[118]

Cameramen at the meeting, were not cowed though by the criticisms coming from Dovzhenko. They fired back, attacking him of being unfair. With film editors in Moscow now backing cameramen in the practice of reenactment, I suggest cameramen were likely further emboldened to not only defend the practice but to stand up to one of the Soviet Union's greatest filmmakers in his criticisms, calling him unreasonable and completely out of touch with reality.

The cameraman Donets defended himself and his colleagues, stating they were doing everything possible to do their job but that conditions on the ground and the Soviet bureaucracy itself hampered their efforts. Donets also accused Dovzhenko of showing great disrespect for him and his colleagues and told him to apologize for his outburst. "You sit here and criticize, while over there, people are dying. I have not seen more outrageous and lord-like behavior. Many have died, many have returned as invalids, wounded, while here some only can insult us." Donets went so far as to make the point that instead of simply criticizing cameramen from the comfort of a chair, Dovzhenko should travel to the front to see for himself the difficult conditions under which cameramen were working, dying and being wounded, and to try and help matters by being in the

[118] From the Transcript of the general meeting of the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking, August 28, 1944, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 1, l. 100–18, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 790.

field and better organizing and managing film groups rather than simply criticizing them for staging combat footage.[119]

Another cameraman, Lebedev also defended himself and his fellow cameramen concerning their work, behavior, and footage. He expressed his anger for what he called "repeated false accusations" by the likes of Dovzhenko and film administrators that cameramen were lazy, cowardly, and undisciplined, reminding them that close to a third of his colleagues up until that point had died trying to record the war on film. "We know there have been suspect episodes in the behavior of our cameramen—there is no batch of apples without a rotten one—but to come out every time and at every meeting to say that all cameramen work poorly, that they are cowards—this is completely wrong."[120]

Moscow Accepts a Proposal from Below for Military Scouts and "Film Machine Guns," Summer 1944

With the Red Army having advanced through Ukraine and about to move into German-occupied Europe in spring of 1944,[121] film heads and administrators instructed frontline cameramen and groups to produce dramatic combat footage depicting Soviet advances, heroism, and the liberation of Europe by the Red Army. On March 21, 1944, Troianovskii ordered that a special group of seasoned and decorated cameramen, including the likes of Karmen, Dobronitskii, Krichevskii, Frolenko, and Shchekut'ev—all recipients of the Stalin prize for frontline filmmaking be sent to work with filmmaking groups on the 2nd Ukrainian front to produce large quantities of

[119] Ibid., 794–96.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 195-201.

dramatic and high-quality footage for Soviet newsreels as well as a full-length documentary film depicting Soviet victories and liberations to come in Romania and Bessarabia.[122]

Yet, Troianovskii was concerned that that he did not have enough experienced cameramen on hand to fulfill the Party's grand vision of filming the Red Army's advances through Europe. Indeed, the brutality of the war on the Eastern Front had taken a toll on Soviet cameramen with a third having perished since the start of the war. Troianovskii, writing in his diary, expressed his anger at the government for the inadequate number of cameramen on hand.[123] He sent a letter to the head of *GlavPURKKA* on the 2nd Ukrainian front to assist the filmmaking group in whatever way possible to ensure that his camera group produce copious amounts of dramatic footage on schedule.[124]

Bol'shakov also was concerned that he did not have enough experienced cameramen on hand to film the liberations of European countries by the Red Army and contacted Party leaders to rectify the situation. On August 8, 1944, Bol'shakov sent a note to Shcherbakov, making clear that there were not enough experienced cameramen on hand to film the historic advance of the Red Army, which placed the Soviet Union at a disadvantage he argued when compared with the much larger numbers of cameramen being employed by Great Britain and the United States on the Western Front. "Even at the most decisive fronts, we can only send a maximum of eight to ten cameramen, while the main military campaigns of the British and the Americans are being filmed by tens and even hundreds of cameramen."[125]

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[122] Letter from Troianovskii to head of the *GlavPURKKA* on the 2nd Ukrainian front Tevchenkov, March 21, 1944, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 186, l. 8, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 608.
[123] See, Troianovskii's diary entry from July 2, 1944 in id., *S vekom na ravne*, 191.
[124] Letter from Troianovskii to head of the *GlavPURKKA* on the 2nd Ukrainian front Tevchenkov, March 21, 1944, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 186, l. 8, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 608.
[125] Proposal by Bol'shakov sent to Shcherbakov about measures to organize a film group of "machine gun-cameramen" (*operatory-avtomatchiki*) from the sergeant class, August 8, 1944, TsGMK, f. 1, op. 3, d. 47, no page number provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 770.

Bol'shakov recommended a novel idea to Shcherbakov to deal with the severe shortage of experienced cameramen, one that was initially proposed to him by the seasoned and respected cameraman Aleksandr Medvedkin: to supply Soviet military scouts with the American 16mm cameras that the Soviets had been routinely using on planes for aerial shots.[126] Military scouts could be quickly trained to use the 16mm cameras, to be retrofitted as hand-held cameras, they could acquire dramatic footage of the Red Army and of the enemy by stealthily getting behind enemy lines, and they could gather intelligence on the enemy while filming.[127]

Bol'shakov proposed that Soviet military personnel be permitted to affix 16mm film cameras (instead of the 32 mm cameras, which were the norm) to planes, tanks, and other forms of transport, thereby bypassing the need for more professional cameramen. The 16mm cameras did not need a professional cameraman to operate them, as they were simple to use and could be turned on and off by military personnel remotely. The cameras were nicknamed *uzkoplenochniki*, or "narrow shooters," by Soviet cameramen for the 16mm film stock they took. With the Party wanting to produce as much dramatic footage as possible of the Red Army liberating Europe, Shcherbakov backed the idea.[128]

However, convincing Bol'shakov and Shcherbakov of his idea proved to be the easy part. It would take Medvedkin several months to overcome several logistical problems before the idea could become a reality. The 16mm aerial cameras were not intended to be carried by cameramen. He needed to find a way to turn the cameras into hand-held cameras. At a time of severe shortages and with most Soviet production converted to military production, this would be a tall order. However, Medvedkin came up with an ingenious solution. He would attach wooden gun stocks

[126] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 246–50.
[127] Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 770.
[128] Ibid.

intended for the Soviet PPSh-41sub-machine gun, as the gun was one of the most common firing weapons used by Soviet soldiers. Medvedkin located the factory in Moscow assembling the gun stocks. He ordered that fifty be produced according to sketches he and his colleagues had come up with. His team of engineers even came up with a view-finder for the camera by relying on a gun scope.[129]

Medvedkin also came up with a new power source for the cameras to be operable in the field. The 16mm cameras ran on a 20-volt electrical supply fed from the planes to which they were attached. Medvedkin's group turned to the director at the *Moselement* battery factory to build a portable power source for their cameras. *Moselement* came up with a special portable battery. However, the battery weighed a heavy 10 kilos and ran out of power quickly. This meant scouts would have to carry spare batteries, which increased the weight of their gear, making it more difficult to get around. Yet, this was the only available power source that could be produced at the time. Military scouts assigned to film in the field would simply have to make do.[130]

Medvedkin's "film machine guns" (*kino-pulemety*) as they came to be known (because they looked like a gun) were ready for action. By fall of 1944, a group of fifty experienced sergeant-cameramen (*serzhanty-operatory*) was taken from the 3rd Belorussian Front and assembled into two film units. The men were given two months of training by cameramen N. Lytkin, G. Golubov, and A. Zeniakin, and put under the command of cameraman Vladimir Krylov. They were supplied with one hundred "film machine guns" and a supply of *Moselement* batteries. Sent to film combat in and around Konigsberg, Medvedkin himself provided detailed instructions about what each cameraman was responsible for filming.[131]

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[129] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 246–50.
[130] Ibid
[131] Ibid.

However, the 16mm cameras routinely cut up film stock and it was a complicated affair to reload the cameras' film cassettes; it took three fingers working in three different ways to reload film into the camera cassette—in the dark, no less. On top of this, the footage coming in was often of very poor physical quality. These were 16mm cameras after all, in the hands of amateurs who had only been trained to use a camera just weeks prior. A great deal of footage had to be discarded. Looking back at the experiment, Medvedkin recalled to what extent they had been armed with poor quality film technology.[132]

The case illustrated once again the great tenacity and persistence of Soviet cameramen to boost Soviet documentary filmmaking capabilities and help Soviet political leaders and film administrators capture dramatic combat footage by going to unbelievable lengths all the while facing innumerable bureaucratic and logistical obstacles. The example of the *serzhanty-operatory* and their *kino-pulemety* also showed Soviet leaders and film administrators desperate for copious amounts of dramatic footage of the Red Army's advance into Europe. The problem was that Medvedkin's novel idea came towards the end of the war, and so was used for only for four months, from February 1945 to May 1945.

Conclusion

The production of hundreds of thousands of meters of war footage on the Eastern Front did not come about solely due to official orders and instructions emanating from Moscow that were then scrupulously followed by cameramen at the frontline. The Soviet system's inefficient and bureaucratic nature, the often unrealistic instructions of central authorities—whether Party leaders, film editors, studio heads, or film administrators, the country's poor filmmaking technology, and

[132] Ibid.

brutal war-time conditions on the Eastern Front conspired to make it almost impossible for official arrangements to function properly and achieve their intended results. In fact, had official Soviet methods of producing war-time footage been followed, the Soviet Union's propaganda efforts with documentary more than likely would have been derailed.

Rather, personal initiative, relationships, and coping mechanisms emanating from below, from cameramen, were critical to keeping the Soviet Union's film propaganda efforts going in war-time. At first, Soviet leaders, film administrators, and film editors did not see eye to eye with cameramen about how best to produce war-time footage or how cameramen should behave and work on the frontline. They repeatedly provided cameramen with official instructions and made clear that unofficial and unorthodox practices adopted by cameramen were unacceptable. Yet, om the end, what was most important for Soviet leaders, film administrators, and film editors was that the production of combat footage continue unabated, irrespective of whether instructions and orders were strictly followed or not. Thus, few cameramen were actually punished for adopting unofficial practices or coping mechanisms. Instead, the Party, film administrators, and editors in Moscow came to tolerate, accept, and in some cases even support the methods, practices, and ideas coming from frontline cameramen and filmmakers.

Chapter Five: The Soviets' Interest in a Diverse Film Record of the War Effort, 1941–45 and Beyond

Introduction

Beginning with the Battle of Moscow, the Soviet regime became interested in depicting the war in a much wider breadth than just footage of combat operations.[1] Soviet leaders and film administrators sent specific instructions to frontline filmmaking groups to produce a diverse set of moving footage of everyday life in war-time, close-ups of German POWs, German war dead and destroyed German military equipment, the destruction and atrocities caused by Germans on Soviet territory, Soviet war-time civilian and military heroes, and top Soviet military brass, the country's political leaders, foreign leaders, and key award ceremonies and meetings. Significant amounts of footage were to be devoted to candid shots of Soviet soldiers, partisans, and civilians reading newspapers, having a cigarette, doing chores, shaving, eating, or even laughing and enjoying themselves, giving the footage an intimate quality, as if one were there.[2]

Meanwhile, film editors and administrators in Moscow systematically identified, separated, and organized the footage. The best quality and most interesting non-combat footage coming in from the front was catalogued as *letopis'* or *kinoletopis'* in Russian, more second rate and less significant footage was to be included in newsreels, and the remainder was to be stored at a film warehouse (*fil'moteka*) or discarded. Twice during the war, after the Battle of Stalingrad

[1] See, for example, the instructional letter from *Glavkinokhronika* to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, "About Footage for the *Kinoletopis'*," December 2, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 186, l. 15–16ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 384.

[2] RGAKFD, 5969, *Rezul'taty vrazheskikh naletov na Leningrad*, 1943; 6054, *Nemtsy razrushili Khar'kov*, 1943; *Zverstva nemtsev nad plennymi krasnoaremitsami*, 1943; 6227, *Tragediia khutora Kreidianka*, 1943; 6820, *Kinodokumenty o zverstvakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov*, 1945; 14110, *Razrushenie Minska*, 1945; 5862, *Oboronitel'nye ukrepleniia pod Moskvoi*, 1941; 5918, *Kontsert na fronte*, 1941; 5936, *Razdacha podarkov boitsam na fronte*, 1941; 6137, *S'emki s fronta*, 1941; 6245, *Leningrad v pervuiu polovinu zimy*, 1941; 6365, *Razdacha obmundirovaniia*, 1941; 8668, *Kinooperatory edut na front*, 1941; 9050, *Kul'trabota na fronte*, 1941; 9174, *Liudmila Pavlichenko*, 1942; 5966, *Na Belorusskom napravlenii*, 1943; 6153, *Frontovoi gastronom*, 1943; 6197, *Moskvichi na ogorode*, 1943; 6264, *Frontovye doma otdykha*, 1943.

and after the Battle of Kursk, Soviet leaders and film administrators instructed a committee of experts to systematize, separate, and identify the most memorable and dramatic non-combat footage of the war effort to get a handle and understanding of it so it could easily be identified and used in the future by writers, scholars, journalists, and filmmakers.

The Soviet leadership and film administrators were interested in producing large amounts of diverse non-combat film material in order to strengthen the appeal of full-length documentaries for domestic and international consumption during the war and to have a film record on hand that could be used to provide future generations and scholars with an official historical record of the Great Patriotic War. Soviet efforts at producing copious amounts of diverse footage were also a culmination of efforts from the previous decade. Soviet film experts, such as Esfir' Shub, who had been interested in documentary had proved to Party leaders and film administrators in the late 1920s and early 1930s the power of having large amounts of varied film material on hand to include in documentary films and in state archives, and of operating well-organized archives to store and keep track of the film material for posterity. Experts such as Shub, had argued that the film material and films could serve as an official historical record of the past and well run and organized archives holding the material would ensure easy access for the Party, film administrators, and film scholars in the future.[3] In the 1930s, Party leaders and film administrators instructed cameramen and filmmakers to produce hundreds of thousands of meters of extra footage portraying the epoch underway from a variety of angles to be included in full-length documentary films but also archived for posterity.[4]

[3] See, Chapter Four's discussion of Shub's importance to the professionalization and expansion of the Soviet documentary filmmaking industry in the late 1920s and early 1930s.
[4] RGAKFD holds thousands of meters of film material from the 1930s classified as *kinoletopis'* film material. A search in the online film catalog of RGAKFD for the 1930s using the term *kinoletopis'* brings up a vast electronic record with content summaries.

The Soviet Union's interest in producing the varied film material was also a product of war-time exigencies. In the first weeks and months of the war, with the Nazis advancing and the Red Army in retreat, Soviet cameramen had little they could film in terms of combat that would be accepted by the Party, film administrators, or editors in Moscow. Filming footage of every-day life on the frontline became a logical alternative. Starting with the Battle of Moscow, Soviet cameramen also came to welcome shooting non-combat footage as they increasingly found it difficult and dangerous to film the kinds of genuine combat and fighting the Party and film administrators also demanded of them. Along with staging of combat footage, the production of powerful non-combat footage by cameramen was a way out of their difficult predicament.

The practice took on a greater urgency for Soviet leaders as they increasingly came to see the war as a pivotal and historic moment for the country and the world starting with the defense of Moscow in winter 1942. They instructed cameramen and filmmakers to produce a gripping account of the war aimed at domestic and international audiences for the present and for the future. The Soviet regime also skillfully relied on dramatic and diverse films material of the war effort to deflect attention from embarrassing defeats, as was the case at the battles of Sevastopol' and Khar'kov in the summer of 1942.

As the Soviet Red Army seized territory from the Nazis, first with the Battle of Moscow and then following the Battle of Stalingrad, film administrators instructed cameramen to film as much grisly footage as possible of the atrocities and destruction committed by the Nazis on Soviet territory to show to the world the barbarism of the Nazi regime. Party leaders and film administrators then came to rely on the film material as the foundation for the Soviet Union's evidence to try the Nazi regime after the war for its crimes committed against humanity — the

archived footage and films about Nazi crimes would also serve to remind future generations for all time of the evil nature of the Nazi regime.

Finally, producing large amounts of diverse and dramatic footage became critical for Soviet leaders when liberating former Soviet territories that had been under Nazi occupation and in Eastern Europe. Footage portraying an intimate, dramatic, and heroic portrait of the partisans and the Red Army freeing peoples formerly occupied by the Nazis would be included in full-length documentaries to be shown in areas liberated by the Soviet Red Army and the film material would then be archived to serve to remind those who had been under occupation in the post-war years with an official history of the horrors of Nazi rule and the justness and heroism of Soviet war efforts. All the while, the overwhelmingly positive feedback from newspaper critics and audiences both at home and abroad about the vivid and varied footage being included in the country's full-length documentaries, I suggest confirmed to the Party, film administrators, film editors, and cameramen and directors of the power of the war footage to move audiences.

Yet, Soviet efforts at producing and utilizing a vast documentary film record of the war effort that was much more varied and dramatic than combat footage has been mostly overlooked by scholars. Most academic work in the West about Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts during the Great Patriotic War has focused on discussions of the messages and representations contained in Soviet war-time newsreels and full-length documentaries.[5] Scholars in the West have also viewed Soviet newsreels and documentaries solely as vehicles to mobilize, inform, and sway audiences to help the Soviet Union to win the war effort[6] or, more recently, as evidence for trying

[5] See, for instance, Roberts, *Forward Soviet!*; Spring, in *Propaganda, Politics, and Film, 1918 – 1945*, 270-292; Taylor, *Film Propaganda*; Kenez, "Black and White"; and Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust*.
[6] See Karel C. Berkhoff, *Motherland in Danger: Soviet Propaganda During World War II* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2012).

the Nazi regime once the war was over.[7] Russian scholars have written little about how or why the war-time *kinoletopis'* film material came to be.[8]

By investigating the Soviet Union's war-time filmmaking efforts through the lens of the regime's efforts at producing a vast, diverse, and dramatic film record of the war effort, what it looked like, why it was created, and how it was utilized, I also add to our understanding of the process of how and when an official Soviet narrative and history of the Great Patriotic War came to be. The Soviet process of creating an official narrative and history of the war effort did not come about solely in the post-war period,[9] but rather began during the war[10] relying on the input of Soviet leaders, administrators, filmmakers and a variety of film experts - both at home and abroad. Finally, I hope the chapter will spark an interest amongst scholars to work with the treasure trove of diverse and dramatic Soviet war-time film material (*kinoletopis'*) held by the Russian State Archive of Film and Photo Documents (RGAKFD).

Initial Interest in Producing Varied Film Material of the War Effort, Summer of 1941

Initially, when the war first broke out, Party leaders were more concerned with surviving the war than with documenting it on film. On June 22, 1941, Bol'shakov telephoned Mekhlis on how to proceed with organizing efforts to film the war. Mekhlis advised that he take matters into his own hands as he had "much more important matters to deal with" and that he was "not up to

[7] See Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust*, 13 and 15. Hicks twice briefly mentions that films and footage of German atrocities in the Soviet Union were for produced for posterity (ibid., 72 and 113).
[8] See Vladimir Mikhailov's writing about the *kinoletopis'*, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 399–406. See also Valerii Fomin's brief comments and impressions in *Tsena Kadra*, 372–75 and id., *Kino na Voine*, 747–49.
[9] See Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).
[10] My findings contribute to a growing body of academic scholarship emphasizing how Soviet leaders created official narratives and histories of important events as they unfolded. See Frederick Corney, *Telling October: Memory and the Making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2004) and Weiner, *Making Sense of War*.

dealing with film at the moment." The next day, Bol'shakov contacted the Minsk and Kiev documentary film studios, instructing them to organize documentary filmmaking units to film war maneuvers of Red Army border troops. Bol'shakov then instructed the directors of the Moscow film studios to ready the most experienced cameramen to travel to the frontline.[11]

Bol'shakov's instructions called for frontline cameramen to film combat operations for newsreels. Three days later, combat footage began to arrive from the front, to be edited and made into newsreels at the Central Documentary Studio in Moscow. A week later, on July 8, the Red Army's operations and maneuvers were being shown on screens across the Soviet Union.[12]

Yet, by summer of 1941, the Soviet government realized it could not withstand the Nazi onslaught and began to issue orders for the mass evacuation of entire factories and industries as well as millions of inhabitants as the German war machine swept east. The Soviet Union suffered immense losses in territory, population, industrial capacity, and military technology and equipment. To counter the retreat and heavy losses, the Party requested that film administrators instruct cameramen to shoot a wider range of footage with the overall message and mood of confidence and smooth preparations underway.[13] The footage included shots of combat and military exercises as well as dramatic footage of the life (*byt*) of Soviet soldiers, partisans, and civilians in time of war.[14]

The footage was intended to lift the spirits of the people, mobilize them to fight, and cover up the reality of how far and quickly German forces had advanced in the first months of the war. Civilians, the military, and leaders were represented as calm and in control. Scenes of ordinary

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[11] From the remembrances of Bol'shakov, NIIK, no further details provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na Voine*, 89.
[12] Ibid.
[13] RGAKFD, 4624, *Soiuzkinozhurnal No. 63*, 1941; 4942, "*Na zashchitu rodnoi Moskvy No. 1*," 1941; 4643, *Soiuzkinozhurnal No. 83*, 1941.
[14] See, for instance, Vladislav Eshurin, "On the Front of the Patriotic War: Two Meetings" ("Na frontakh otechesetvennoi voiny: Dve vstrechi"), *Pravda*, August 26, 1941, 2.

civilians reading the newspaper *Pravda* with Stalin's portrait on the front page appeared, and footage depicted Soviet tanks preparing to go into battle. Soviet soldiers as well as civilians were often shown smiling, well dressed, well fed, and going about their business in an organized fashion. Military personnel in these newsreels were not in combat, but simply preparing for war. Civilians were shown producing goods and service at the home-front and rear to help with the war effort. [15]

Foreign film critics and writers reviewing Soviet newsreels noticed that the footage being produced and included in newsreels of ordinary life (*byt*) was striking and made the material powerful and memorable. The reviews must have showed Soviet film administrators and Party leaders early on the potential power of producing a range of film material on the frontline to move audiences. The American novelist and short story writer Erskine Caldwell, who was on an official visit to the Soviet Union wrote an article praising Soviet frontline documentary filmmaking efforts for the newspaper *Kino* in August 1941. Caldwell drew the reader's attention to the moving non-combat footage contained in the *Soiuzkinozhurnal* newsreel series 70–74 of the ordinary life on the frontline of Red Army soldiers. "I will long remember the shots that show the pilot during a free minute who placed his mirror on the fuselage of his fighter plane and was shaving in front of it. Such details are deep with meaning, and audiences will not tire of seeing them."[16]

The Push for Diverse and Memorable Film Material, Fall 1941

In early fall of 1941, panic and fear gripped Moscow. German forces were located just outside the city's outskirts and rumors spread of a Nazi advance into the city.[17] By October 1941,

[15] RGAKFD, 4624, 4942, and 4643.
[16] Erskine Caldwell, "Soviet Frontline Documentary Filmmaking" ("Sovetskaia frontovaia khronika"), *Kino*, August 3, 1941, no page number provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 119.
[17] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 81.

the country's entire collection of archived footage from before the war had been evacuated to Novosibirsk to make sure that should the Nazis take Moscow, they could not seize the material.[18]

Despite the extremely challenging circumstances, several Soviet cameramen had reached Moscow in October and were filming the city in war-time. They filmed a variety of footage of Moscow and Muscovites that according to them was as powerful and necessary as footage from the frontline as it too conveyed the heroism of the Soviet people in war-time. "We filmed the digging of anti-tank trenches on the outskirts of the city and placing anti-tank barriers, the erection of sandbag barricades, placement of Zenith anti-aircraft cannons on the roofs of buildings, the formation of voluntary communist divisions being sent right to the front, and the work of factories producing military hardware. If at the front we filmed the heroism of our warriors, then here we saw the heroic feats of our working people."[19]

Meanwhile, the onset of winter and stiff resistance by the Red Army slowed the Nazi advance outside Moscow, providing Stalin the opportunity to summon critical reinforcements of equipment and personnel to defend the capital.[20] With the German military dug in on the outskirts of Moscow, Stalin informed the Soviet people at the official commemoration of the twenty-fourth anniversary of the October Revolution inside the Maiakovskii metro station on November 6, 1941 that the German Blitzkrieg plan to capture Leningrad and Moscow and defeat the Soviet Union had failed, and that now it was only a matter of time before German forces would be defeated and the Soviet Union would liberate its people and all of Europe from Nazi enslavement.[21]

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[18] Vasil'chenko at a meeting of the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs about the condition and tasks of the documentary film record, sometime in 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 136, l. 9.
[19] From the remembrances of Anatolii Krylov, TsGMK, f. 28, no other details provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 136.
[20] Overy, *Russia's War*, 113-119.
[21] Speech at Celebration Meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Working People's Deputies and Moscow Party and Public Organizations, November 6, 1941, in Stalin, *War Speeches*,12–24.

The cameraman Krylov recalled how while recording Stalin's speech he was able to film powerful footage of tears streaming down the faces of those in attendance. "Those present listened, as if frozen, and some had tears running down their cheeks. Yes! Tears! It was extraordinary. They were on the eyes of those sitting in the audience and those sitting at the presidium. And Stalin could not have not noticed this."[22] The next day, Stalin held a parade at Red Square and had cameramen film the event to boost morale and show domestic and world audiences that the Soviet Union's leader was undeterred by the proximity of the Nazis.[23]

Stalin decided it was time to produce a dramatic and memorable full-length documentary film chronicling the coming decisive battle he planned. He sent a telegram to Bol'shakov in November to immediately meet with him "in order to fulfill a very important assignment." Stalin informed Bol'shakov that the Soviet military was going to launch a counter-attack against the Nazis near Moscow in early December and that the Germans would be forced to pull back. The event would be of historic significance, boosting the morale of soldiers and ordinary people, and proving to the world that the Soviet Union was capable of pushing the Germans back. Stalin wanted a film that would stand the test of time, to be seen as an official record of the Soviet defense of the capital, and as a work of great art conveying in the most dramatic way the Soviet Union withstanding and pushing back the Nazis. "All of this must be captured on film and a good film be made." [24]

Stalin instructed Bol'shakov to organize the remaining film personnel in Moscow and cameramen filming on the frontline to begin shooting large amounts of varied footage for a full-length documentary of the Soviet counteroffensive. Stalin wanted to be involved personally

[22] TsGMK, f. 28, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 142.
[23] Troianovskii, *S vekom naravne*, 154, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 726.
[24] From Bol'shakov's remembrances, NIIK, no other information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 146.

throughout the entire process of the film's production. He asked that he be informed of the cameramen's work in and around Moscow and stressed the importance of meeting deadlines for the film. Stalin wanted the film to come out as quickly as possible. Stalin also wanted the counter-offensive to be recorded in the best possible way to sear into the hearts and minds of domestic and international audiences the historic moment of victory for the Soviet people, the Party, and for the entire world.[25]

Other Soviet officials also wanted to chronicle the Soviet Union's predicted large-scale victories against the Nazis that would follow the Moscow counter-offensive and called on cameramen to film a wide array of footage. In December 1941, Mekhlis, head of the Main Political Administration of the Red Army (*GlavPURKKA*), instructed the political chiefs of the Red Army to send the remainder of the country's top frontline cameramen and filmmakers to the most important sections of the Eastern Front to shoot combat footage of German defeats, Soviet victories and advances, the brave and heroic acts of the Red Army, its soldiers, commanders, and political workers and the military operations of the partisans. He also called on cameramen to produce a variety of types of footage besides combat of soldiers of the various Soviet nationalities, scenes demonstrating the friendship of the peoples of the USSR in the Red Army, the Red Army meeting local people after freeing villages and cities from German occupation, images of political workers living and working in the field, the living conditions and lives of ordinary soldiers and their commanders at the front, footage of Soviet military units, divisions, and soldiers who had stood out in battle.[26]

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Directive by Mekhlis to the heads of GlavPURKKA on the frontline, "About Documentary Footage Being Produced on the Frontline of the Patriotic War," before December 30, 1941, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 71, l. 229–31, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine,* 155.

Mekhlis explained the political significance of the diverse footage in showing the strength of the Soviet Union and its military for domestic and international audiences in order to finally erase the myth of the Germans being undefeatable. "Quality frontline documentary footage, shown on foreign screens, will be a convincing source of propaganda and a way to popularize the strength and might of the Red Army." But Mekhlis did not stop there. He instructed the chiefs of the political divisions of the Red Army to make sure that every important subsequent military operation of the war be adequately recorded to be archived for posterity. "The world-historical importance of the Great Patriotic War demands the creation of a documentary chronicle (*dokumental'naia letopis')* of events, showing the advance of the Red Army and the beginning of the defeat of Hitler's Germany."[27]

Meanwhile, by mid-December, the Red Army had liberated territory west of Moscow; one of the first large cities to be taken by the Soviets was Kalinin.[28] The Germans had been in the city only two months, but large-scale atrocities against the people had been committed and severe damage had been inflicted on the city's buildings and infrastructure.[29] Soviet leaders had been instructing cameramen to turn their cameras towards shooting Nazi destruction and atrocities committed on Soviet territory since November 1941.[30] As more cities and areas, such as Kalinin, were freed, cameramen witnessed and filmed ever more atrocities and destruction on Soviet territory. Cameramen also encountered on a large scale and filmed, for the first time, German war dead, POWs, and military equipment. The footage was included not only in the first full-length

[27] Ibid., 154.
[28] Overy, *Russia's War,* 119.
[29] From the remembrances of Aleksei Semin in Grigorii Tsitriniak, *Ne Zabyto! Rasskazy frontovykh operatorov.* (Moscow: VBSK, 1986), 26, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 155–56.
[30] See my earlier discussion in Chapter Four of the importance of producing footage and films to document the atrocities and destruction committed by the Nazis on the Eastern Front as part of the Extraordinary State Commission (*Chrezvychainaia Gosudarstvennaia Kommissiia*, ChGK), created on November 2, 1941.

documentary about the Battle of Moscow but placed in the state film and photo archive, to be labeled as film chronicle material (*kinoletopis'*).[31]

Soviet leaders' interest in producing memorable film material on a wide-range of prescribed topics in winter of 1941 was also a reflection of a much larger effort following the Moscow counter-offensive to create an official history, interpretation, and periodization of the war. As part of the efforts at producing an official narrative and history of the war, the Party instructed its documentary film administrators to collect and archive the personal and work-related materials and artifacts of its frontline cameramen.

In early 1942, Katsman sent a letter to frontline cameramen directing them to preserve for future generations materials of their collective effort in war-time including trophy cameras, documents, clothing, and photos of significant events from the war, as well as to keep a journal documenting their work and the important events, people, episodes, and experiences they had encountered.[32] The war-time work journals were to include information about how cameramen had filmed footage, under what conditions, how shots were organized, and the various methods by which cameramen had worked. Katsman required cameramen to send the materials and artifacts to Moscow to *Glavkinokhronika* to be archived.[33] Judging by the enormous amount of materials archived,[34] the Party attributed a great deal of importance to collecting the war-time personal material and journals of frontline cameramen, to ensure their stories and the stories of the places, events, and people they had encountered and filmed serve as a persuasive source for telling and retelling the story of the Great Patriotic War to domestic and international audiences.

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[31] See for example the documentary film record, *kinoletopis'* (k/l) in Russian, filmed in 1941 and held by RGAKFD: 5862/122, 5918/24906, 5936/24847, 6137/24846, 6087/24530, 6141/24620, 6200/24353, 6245/270, 6276/24389, 6365/124, 8320/24518, 8331/NA, 8668/24310, 8754/203, and 9050/24438.

[32] A more precise date in 1942 is unknown.

[33] Letter from Katsman to the cameramen of frontline film groups, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 90, l. 26, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 290.

[34] I worked through hundreds of such artifacts and materials held by TsGMK.

Echoing Katsman, Karmen, on February 22, 1942, in a letter to Boris Sher and his colleagues assigned to the partisans, stressed the importance of keeping a journal about the people he had filmed. "Remember, the most important subject that can be filmed about the partisans is the people themselves. About every person you film, write two pages in your journal." Karmen detailed what Sher and his colleagues should include in their journals about partisan life: phrases, jokes, people's biographies, their appearance, the history of their combat episodes, numbers, dates, names, nicknames, habits, personal items, food; furthermore, they should devote at least one hour per day to recording these. Finally, Karmen stressed that Sher and his colleagues keep a diary, joking: "in fact, I will kill you, if you are not keeping a diary." [35]

Karmen also called on Sher and his cameramen to film as much diverse footage of the partisans as possible, not paying attention to whether the footage was related to military maneuvers or combat. Karmen let Sher know that to wait for large-scale military operations or not shoot other types of footage besides combat in the meantime was wrong. "You must film unceasingly, practically everything that surrounds you." Karmen provided details not only what to film but how to film. "Film people expressively, richly, and dramatically. Film as much as you can of everyday life amongst the partisans: including all kinds of details such as their food, their clothing, their passwords, their symbols, their signals, their whistles, rockets, radio communication devices and so forth."[36]

Meanwhile, on February 18, 1942, *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow* was shown to Soviet audiences in the country's largest movie theaters and to soldiers on the front. Long lines formed in Moscow and Leningrad to watch the film. The reviews by Soviet and international critics of the film's footage of the life of the Soviet people in war-time were glowing.

[35] Letter from Karmen to Sher, February 22, 1942, TsGMK, f. 32, op. 2, d. 13, l. 2.
[36] Ibid.

Pravda, on February 15, 1942, called the film's film footage of ordinary people and soldiers defending the country's capital poignant and moving.[37] *Izvestiia* was so impressed with the film that it published an article entitled "How the Film Was Shot" ("Kak snimalsia fil'm"), in which Katsman explained in detail the creation of the film's stirring non-combat footage to readers. Echoing Stalin's predictions of victories ahead, Katsman also stated that the film was the first in the line of many to come, as cameramen would film the liberation of Soviet lands from German occupation.[38] Days later, *Pravda* published an article written by the cameramen Bunimovich and Pavel Kasatkin describing the conditions under which the rich and exciting footage was shot and the variety of footage amassed.[39] Both Soviet newspapers also published extensive audience reactions to the film and its footage.[40]

Internationally, copies of the film were flown to the United States, Great Britain, Turkey, Iran, and other countries for exhibition. Eight hundred copies of the film were made.[41] Critics in the United States, France, Great Britain, and elsewhere also hailed the film's wide range of non-combat footage. *The New York Times* found "particularly striking" and "unforgettable" the footage of ordinary Soviet people returning to their villages and homes after the Red Army had liberated those areas from German occupation. Shots of the Soviet partisans returning to a liberated village

[37] "Poem of Victory" ("Poema o Pobede"), *Pravda*, February 15, 1942, 2.
[38] Roman Katsman, "How the Film was Shot" ("Kak snimalsia fil'm"), *Izvestiia*, February 15, 1942, 3.
[39] Teodor Bunimovich and Pavel Kasatkin, "How the Film was Created" ("Kak voznikal fil'm"), *Pravda*, February 19, 1942, 2.
[40] "Emotional Narrative of the Heroic Defense of Moscow: Audience Reactions to the Film *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow*" ("Volnuiushchaia povest' o geroicheskoi oborone Moskvy: Otkliki zritelei na kinofil'm *Razgrom nemetskikh voisk pod Moskvoi*"), *Pravda*, February 19, 1942, 2; "Viewers of the film *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow*" ("Zriteli o fil'me *Razgrom nemetskikh voisk pod Moskvoi*"), *Izvestiia*, February 19, 1942, 3.
[41] From Bol'shakov's remembrances, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 146.

were seen as some "of the most effective scenes in a documentary that is in the best Soviet film tradition." [42]

The glowing domestic and international responses must have further confirmed to Stalin, the Party, and film administrators that the immense amounts of varied film material being produced by Soviet cameramen, reviewed by film editors in Moscow, and included in Soviet full-length documentaries was having a powerful impact on domestic and international audiences and critics alike. Soviet film administrators now turned to ensuring that the plight of Leningrad be chronicled in a similar fashion. On March 28, 1942, Bol'shakov informed Leningrad city secretary Shumilov that Karmen, who had been awarded the Stalin Prize for his vivid footage included in *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow*, was to be sent to the city along with a special group of personnel to ensure sufficient amounts of powerful and high-quality footage be produced for a full-length film about Leningrad and its people during the blockade.[43] Karmen was made responsible for administering and running the day-to-day affairs of the filmmaking group in Leningrad.[44] To show the importance of the Leningrad project and Leningrad's cameramen, the Party instructed that Karmen and his film crew bring not only much needed food supplies for Leningrad's cameramen, but delicacies such as chocolate, sausage, and even caviar, all of which Leningrad's cameramen had not seen since the start of the war.[45]

Meanwhile, on April 11, 1942, Stalin awarded the film *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow* and its filmmakers and cameramen the Stalin Prize, the highest award in the

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[42] "Film of the Defense of Moscow Depicts Army's and People's Fight: Soviet Documentary Movie Shows Village Liberated by Guerillas and Cavalry Charge Turning Back Nazis East of Tula," *The New York Times*, February 17, 1942, 9.
[43] Telegram from Bol'shakov to Shumilov, March 28, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 100, l. 5, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 173.
[44] Letter from Katsman to the director of the Leningrad studio for documentary films Grigorii Khalipov, March 28, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 100, l. 2–2ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 175.
[45] Slavin, *Roman Karmen*, 125–27, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 180.

Soviet Union.[46] Stalin would watch the film a number of times and show it to guests during the war. He hailed the film and its footage as the example for all subsequent full-length documentaries and film material to be produced during the war. The Party prepared a brochure in May 1942, published by *Goskinoizdat* in July, about the film. It provided a step-by-step description of the film's varied images with illustrations. The cover of the brochure presented the film as an official film chronicle of the Great Patriotic War' (*kinoletopis' velikoi otechestvennoi voiny*).[47]

Covering up Embarrassing Defeats with Dramatic and Varied Film Material, May–July 1942

On May 1, 1942, in his address to the Soviet people, Stalin reported that the Soviet Union and Red Army had become much stronger since the start of the war while the position of the German military and Germany had severely deteriorated.[48] Stalin instructed his military commanders to launch a large-scale offensive in spring of 1942 in the direction of Khar'kov and Kerch'. In May 1942, Bol'shakov gave a speech to the heads of frontline film groups about the importance of recording "great and decisive victories which would lead to the defeat of the German-fascist occupiers." The victories would be like no other that the world had seen in history, according to Bol'shakov. [49]

Yet, Stalin and Soviet intelligence underestimated the Germans' capabilities. The Germans had gathered enough information about the Soviet planned military offensive to regroup. By May 17, 1942, the Red Army's advance was halted near Khar'kov, followed by the Soviets suffering

[46] As reprinted in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino 1930-1945*, 740.
[47] *Razgrom nemetskikh voisk pod Moskvoi: Kinoletopis' velikoi otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow: Goskinoizdat, 1942).
[48] Stalin, *War Speeches*, 34–35.
[49] Transcript of a meeting of the heads of frontline filmmaking groups with Bol'shakov, May 12–13, 1942, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 58, l. 3–4.

heavy losses across a vast swath of the front. The German army seized Kerch' on the Crimean front, where over 176,000 Soviet troops were either killed, captured, or missing. Approximately 207,000 Soviet army personnel were killed, captured, or went missing near Khar'kov. [50]

The Party made little mention of the embarrassing and painful defeats in the Soviet press; instead, Stalin called on the Soviet people to unleash all their anger, vengeance, and hatred to kill and destroy the German military. Throughout the summer of 1942, the Party also turned to the Soviet Union's army of cultural workers, artists, and intellectuals, including its documentary filmmakers and cameramen, to fan emotions amongst soldiers, partisans, and ordinary people with messages of wrath and hatred against the Germans and anguish for the horror and pain inflicted on the Soviet people by the Nazis.[51]

Also, to redirect attention away from the defeats, Soviet leaders requested that film administrators instruct camera crews to produce footage for two large scale films: one chronicling a day in the life of the Soviet Union at war, and the second chronicling the heroic defense of Sevastopol'. On June 5, 1942, the head of the film crew attached to the North-Western Front and battalion commissar Sergei Gusev sent detailed instructions to 160 of the country's cameramen regarding what kinds of footage to shoot documenting one day in the life of the Soviet Union in war-time: June 13, 1942.[52]

The instructions by Gusev specified that cameramen were to film a range of topics for the film: military and non-military operations, equipment, personnel, and places, German POWs,

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[50] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 135, 137.

[51] See, for example: Aleksei Tolstoi, "Kill the Beast!" ("Ubei zveria!"), *Pravda*, June 23, 1942, 2; Konstantin Simonov's poem "Kill him" ("Ubei ego!") published in *Krasnaia zvezda*, July 18, 1942, 3; Aleksei Surkov's poem, "I Hate!," ("Nenavizhu!") published in *Krasnaia zvezda*, August 12, 1942, 3. For additional examples see Alexander Werth, *Russia at War, 1941–1945* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1964), 410–22.

[52] Instructions to the film group serving on the Northwest front for the film *Day of War* (*Den' voiny*) from head of the film group and battalion commissar Gusev, TsGMK, f. 56, no other information provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 202–03.

destroyed German equipment and defeated German personnel, and liberated villages and villagers welcoming the Red Army. Cameramen were instructed when to shoot close-ups and when to shoot far-away shots, but they were also given the flexibility to shoot footage they personally deemed significant or interesting. Finally, cameramen were called on to film detailed every-day items displaying the date of June 13: watches, newspapers, calendars, and reports.[53]

Meanwhile, a 110-minute documentary film called *Black Sea Fleet Sailors* (*Chernomortsy*) based on a range of footage shot of the defense of Sevastopol' directed by Vasilii Beliaev was released on June 23, 1942.[54] Less than two weeks after the film's release, on July 4, 1942, Sevastopol fell to the Germans.[55] The Soviet leadership proceeded to downplay the loss. Soviet newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* carried no reviews of the film and its footage and made no mention of the tens of thousands of Soviet soldiers who were now POWs. Instead, *Glavkinokhronika* released *Defense of Leningrad* (*Leningrad v bor'be*) on July 9, 1942 co-directed by Karmen, I. Komartsev, Valerii Solovtsov, and Efim Uchitel'.[56]

Soviet newspapers carried glowing reviews written by the cameramen who had produced the range of footage contained in the film about Leningrad. Uchitel' and Solovtsov in *Izvestiia*, from July 10, 1942, expressed their view that audiences could not remain untouched by the film's footage, particularly its non-combat footage, "which stabs you like a knife, lacerating and injuring you, remaining in your memory for all times." Uchitel' and Solovtsov added how the variety of rich footage incorporated into the film was produced under extremely difficult circumstances in a

[53] Ibid., 203.
[54] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 744.
[55] Overy, *Russia's War*, 156.
[56] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 745.

city blockaded by German forces.[57] *Pravda* described in detail and with fanfare the film's range of footage and the themes covered.[58]

The New York Times, on February 11, 1943, called the film "a graphic survey of the misery, hunger, and death the city endured and a moving tribute to the valor of its soldiers and civilians, […] a unique historical document as well as a harrowing illustration of facts," and the scenes of ordinary life in the city "heart-rending," concluding that "this is your evidence of the ultimate meaning and sacrifice of total war."[59] The extremely positive reviews by domestic and international critics of the film again must have proved to Soviet leaders and film administrators that they were right to direct their best personnel and resources towards producing immense amounts of diverse film material besides combat footage that could be used to move audiences both in times of victory and, now, in painful defeat.

The Creation of Memorable and Diverse Footage of Stalingrad at War: July 1942–March 1943

As German forces approached Stalingrad in late July 1942, Stalin, desperate to stem the German advance, issued Order 227, known as "Not One Step Back!" ("Ni shagu nazad!"), on July 28, 1942, to re-establish discipline amongst a Red Army that had performed poorly throughout the summer.[60] Soviet leaders prepared to document what they hoped would be another historic turning point in the war at Stalingrad. Film administrators directed the majority of cameramen and heads

[57] Uchitel' and Solovtsov, "How We Shot the Film" ("Kak my snimali fil'm"), *Izvestiia*, July 10, 1942, 3.
[58] "*Leningrad at War*: Documentary Film, Produced by the Leningrad Studio of Documentary Films" ("*Leningrad v bor'be*: Dokumental'nyi fil'm, Proizvodstvo Leningradskoi Studii Kinokhroniki"), *Pravda*, July 10, 1942, 3.
[59] Bowsley Crowther, "*Siege of Leningrad*, the Soviet Film Record of the City's Grim, Exalting Ordeal, Opens at the Stanley," *The New York Times*, February 11, 1943, 22.
[60] As part of the order, penal battalions (*shtraf bataliony*) were established to fight in the most dangerous parts of the front, blocking detachments were created to shoot retreating soldiers or to push on those soldiers hesitant to fight, and military tribunals set up to try higher military personnel who ordered retreat. See Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 144, 135.

of frontline filmmaking groups stationed on the South-Western front to relocate to the outskirts of Stalingrad and shoot as much raw combat footage as possible of the actual offensive against the Germans near the city.[61]

Yet field conditions quickly deteriorated as the Germans drove further towards Stalingrad. In August 1942, the Germans were incessantly bombarding the city and its outskirts and a fire swept the city. By September, street to street battles had erupted within the city between the German and Soviet armies. From September to early November 1942, the city and its surroundings were engulfed in prolonged fighting in which both sides suffered severe losses. [62] Cameramen found it difficult to impossible to shoot combat footage under such conditions.

To provide an uplifting morale booster and to commemorate the historic nature of the Soviet war effort up to that moment on October 22, 1942, the Party released the 80-minute documentary, *Day of War* (*Den' Voiny*) directed by Mikhail Slutskii.[63] In the press, the Party's official artists and writers informed Soviet readers of the memorable nature of the film and its powerful footage. In a review in *Pravda* by the immensely popular Soviet poet, author, and war time correspondent Konstantin Simonov, Simonov claimed *Day of War* was powerful because of its diverse and dramatic footage shot across the Soviet Union. Simonov also made clear the film was not aimed simply for the present but for posterity, to be reshown to future generations, with an eye for "standing the test of time."[64] *Izvestiia*'s review of *Day of War* also referred directly to the film's historical importance not only for the present but for future generations and implored readers to never forget what was shown, reminding them the film's footage had been shot by

[61] RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 58, l. 1–6, as cited in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 220.
[62] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 147–49.
[63] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 749.
[64] Simonov, "*Den' Voiny*," 3.

cameramen "with the memory of descendants" in mind.[65] Strong reviews by international critics also proved to the Party once again that its efforts with producing full-length documentary films of the war containing a diversity of vivid footage of the country and its people at war were paying off. *The New York Times* wrote on October 18, 1942 that the film was powerful because its footage was "wider in scope than anything the Soviet filmmakers had attempted since the war."[66]

In the meantime, in early November 1942, filming conditions improved in Stalingrad and, by December, Katsman and Popov sent instructions to Kuznetsov to have cameramen produce a wide variety of dramatic footage to commemorate the "heroic advance of the Red Army, which will enter the annals of history as a decisive point of the Fatherland war, which must be shown from the widest possible angles – meaningful in their content, powerful in their form." They provided detailed instructions to camera crews including producing various footage of the heroes of Stalingrad, trophy material seized, Germans and their allies as POWs, and Soviet forces being greeted by civilians following liberation. To further make clear the kinds of high-quality raw footage wanted, Katsman and Popov invoked *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow*, calling for the footage about Stalingrad to be as good. They also called on cameramen and filmmakers to read the writings of esteemed Soviet wartime journalist Vasilii Grossman to inspire them to film dramatic and memorable scenes of daily life. According to Katsman and Popov, Grossman's writing was moving, because it focused on the small details in the daily life of soldiers

[65] "*Day of War*: New Documentary Film" ("*Den' Voiny*: Novyi dokumental'nyi fil'm") *Izvestiia*, October 22, 1942, 3.
[66] "Still Making Films on the Russian Front: Notes on Several New Productions which May Soon Be Shown in this Country," *The New York Times*, October 18, 1942, 3.

at the front and of civilians caught in the middle of war.[67] Soviet leaders so recognized the power and popularity of Grossman's writings that he was chosen to write the narration for *Stalingrad*.[68]

Soviet cameramen delivered, producing a staggering 35,000 meters of raw footage covering over 100 different scenes in and around Stalingrad. Editors in Moscow classified the vast majority of the footage, over 25,000 meters, as war-time film chronicle material (*kinoletopis'*) to be placed in the state documentary film archive. Around 2,000 meters of footage was used for the film *Stalingrad*. Three to four thousand meters of footage, mostly of combat related operations, went into the making of newsreels.[69]

Stalingrad, I would suggest, marked the next phase in the Soviet Union's efforts at producing dramatic and diverse non-combat film material, which now surpassed the amount of combat footage being produced. Of a total of approximately fifty themes shot along the Volkhov front during 1942, twenty were devoted to combat and military actions while thirty covered a variety of other subjects including the devastation left by the Germans on Soviet territory, the operation of Soviet newspapers on the frontline, the work of surgeons, medics, and nurses at the front, Soviet soldiers wounded in action, the ordinary life of soldiers, Soviet propaganda efforts amongst German soldiers, the repair of infrastructure, the operation of Soviet factories, and liberated areas of the Soviet Union.[70]

At the end of January 1943, Stalin's hopes again grew that the Red Army would push the Germans completely out of Soviet territory. On January 25, 1943, he called on the Red Army to advance onward "to rout the German invaders and their expulsion from the boundaries of our

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[67] Final report by Katsman and Popov from *Glavkinokhronika* to Kuznetsov, head of the Stalingrad film group, about the work of the film group from October–November 1942, December 19, 1942, RGALI, f, 2451, op. 1, d. 78, l. 38–40 ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 248–52.
[68] See the initial credits for the film *Stalingrad*, in RGAKFD, 5145, 1943.
[69] Unpublished monograph by Mikhailov, NIIK, Mikhailov collection, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 399–401.
[70] Short list of the film material produced along the Volkhov front from January–December 1942 provided by the head of the Volkhov front filmmaking group B. Timofeev, December 20, 1943, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 59/50, l. 12–15.

Motherland!"[71] However, the Germans regrouped and launched a successful counter-offensive in February 1943.[72] Stalin, speaking on February 23, 1943, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Red Army's formation, admitted it "unwise and harmful self-delusion" to think that the German forces "were done for."[73]

To inspire the Soviet people to keep fighting, the Soviet leadership released and began exhibiting *Stalingrad* on March 1, 1943.[74] The film conveyed to audiences at home and abroad Soviet victory at Stalingrad and the great sacrifices made and the heroism portrayed by the Soviet people all the while making sure to show the Germans in the worst possible light. *The New York Times* emphasized the film's diverse footage, including film material taken directly from captured German newsreels, poignant scenes of Stalingrad before the war, powerful images of the bodies of dead Soviet soldiers, and emotional footage of the German retreat following the Soviet victory at Stalingrad.[75]

The Call for Wide-Ranging Footage of the Partisan Movement: April–August 1943

In a May 1, 1943 order, Stalin stated that the course of the war was in the Soviets' favor. Stalin added, though, that a series of crucial blows against German forces would be needed to defeat the enemy completely. He directly addressed both the Red Army and the partisans to help him achieve victory.[76]

Glavkinokhronika instructed cameramen working alongside the partisans to film a variety of material about the work and life of the partisans to include in a full-length documentary film to

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[71] Stalin, *War Speeches*, 53.
[72] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 145-147.
[73] Stalin, *War Speeches*, 56.
[74] "The Film *Stalingrad*" ("Fil'm *Stalingrad*"), *Pravda*, March 5, 1943, 3, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 761.
[75] "Soviet Film Shows Epic of *Stalingrad*," *The New York Times*, March 5, 1943, 20.
[76] Stalin, *War Speeches*, 60, 62.

be called "The Avengers" (*Mstiteli*). The documentary filmmaker Vasilii Beliaev provided a detailed list of the topics to shoot for the film: footage of the horrors committed under Nazi occupation of cities and villages in flames, homeless civilians and refugees, returning refugees, and evidence of Nazi barbarism (*varvarstvo*), relying on both Soviet footage as well as captured German footage. Beliaev also instructed cameramen to film the unity and friendship between the partisans and the Red Army: footage of the Red Army and the partisans meeting, working, and living together. Beliaev described in detail to cameramen also how to frame their shots to make them more moving. He asked that they contain depth of field, with a background, mid-ground, and foreground, citing the examples of Russian classical paintings. To further help them understand the kind of atmosphere and mood he was looking for he called on cameramen to recall such Russian classical works of literature such as *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*) written by Lev Tolstoi in 1873 and *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*) anonymously written in the 12th century.[77] Aleksandr Dovzhenko would directly supervise and guide the film crew.[78] In calling on Dovzhenko, himself a Ukrainian, film administrators wanted to ensure that footage of the partisans would pass through the hands of a veteran filmmaker and that the end product, a full-length documentary film and archived footage, would be of the highest caliber.

Meanwhile, in spring of 1943, Soviet intelligence correctly pinpointed a coming German offensive would take place at Kursk. The Party began moving large numbers of military personnel and equipment into the region. Soviet misinformation helped to confuse the Germans about the Soviets' true plans.[79] On July 5, 1943, the Germans launched their attack.[80] Near Kursk, the Red

[77] See for example, to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups (handwritten also to the Volkhov front to comrade Timofeev) and stamped by *Glavkinokhronika*, May 7, 1943, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 59/1, l. 1–2.
[78] Krasovskii, *Dovzhenko*, 512, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 766.
[79] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 214–18.
[80] Ibid., 218–20.

Army and German armed forces clashed in what became the largest and most terrible tank engagement of the war.[81] Fighting was fierce and Soviet cameramen again found it almost impossible to shoot footage of real combat operations. Instead, they waited until after the major fighting was over to either shoot reenacted combat and film the aftermath of combat operations including large amounts of non-combat footage.[82]

In late July, it became clear both sides had suffered incredible losses at Kursk but that the Soviets had prevailed. A feeling of euphoria swept the Soviet leadership of the critical victory the Red Army had achieved at Kursk. Stalin made his only visit to the front travelling to the area August 1. Upon his return to Moscow, Stalin ordered a victory salute at midnight August 5 to commemorate the liberation of Orel and Belgorod by the Red Army.[83] Stalin issued a communique stating, "Eternal glory to the heroes who fell in the struggle for the freedom of our country."[84]

Two weeks later, on August 19, 1943, film administrators released *The People's Avengers* (*Narodnye mstiteli*), co-directed by Beliaev and Komarevtsev. Reviewers drew attention in the press to the film's gripping footage of life and death that would move audiences in the present and in the future. *Pravda*, in its detailed review from August 20, 1943, wrote that the film's images "would burn in the hearts of our children. Let them never forget what they have seen. As we will never forget and never forgive."[85]

Later in 1944, a reviewer for *The New York Times* would also be moved by the film's "extensive footage […] given to the actual day-by-day living of the partisans, their few and mild recreations and even their production of underground newspapers" and the footage of atrocities

[81] Werth, *Russia at War*, 682–84.
[82] See for example, the letter from Karavkin (the chief editor in the frontline documentary filmmaking section of *Glavkinokhronika*) to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, summer 1943, TsGMK, f. 56, op. 1, d. 63/17, l. 1.
[83] Overy, *Russia's War*, 210-212
[84] Werth, *Russia at War*, 684-685, as cited in Overy, *Russia's War*, 212.
[85] Vadim Kozhevnikov, "*The People's Avengers*" ("*Narodnye mstiteli*"), *Pravda*, August 20, 1943, 3.

committed by the Germans on Soviet territory, which provided "moments of ghastly reality when murdered citizens are shown close up."[86] Again, the Soviet leaders and film administrators were vindicated in their instructing Soviet cameramen to shoot a variety of non-combat film material of the war effort.

Meanwhile, in the first days of September of 1943, the Party released *Battle of Orlov (Orlovskaia bitva)* directed by Rafail Gikov and L. Stepanova — based on raw footage taken at Orlov and Kursk—to Soviet audiences. Both *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* hailed the film's footage, particularly its footage of ordinary life on the front, and stated that the film would stand the test of time. On September 3, 1943, a reviewer for *Izvestiia* wrote that the cameramen "had preserved for millions of people, for history, for our descendants, the truth about the grandiose battles of 1943," and he expressed his admiration for captured footage of German soldiers in trenches awaiting an assault for providing a glimpse of real life in the trenches.[87] *Pravda*, on September 6, 1943, drew attention to the dramatic effect the film's non-combat footage would have on audiences, devoted to Soviet military personnel, leaders, and political figures, preparations for battle, destruction caused by the Germans, and rebuilding in and around Orlov.[88]

Fall of 1943: Pushing for More Footage of Nazi Atrocities and Destruction and Systematizing the Vast Film Record of the War Effort

In August 1943, Stalin made plans for the Red Army to advance into Ukraine and Belarussia.[89] On September 8, 1943, Vasil'chenko instructed frontline filmmakers and cameramen

[86] P.P.K., "*People's Avengers*, a Picture Showing Activities of Soviet Parachutists behind Lines of the Enemy, Opens at Stanley," *The New York Times*, June 15, 1944, 16.
[87] Evgenii Kriger, "*Battle of Orlov*" ("*Orlovskaia Bitva*"), *Izvestiia*, September 3, 1943, 4.
[88] David Zaslavskii, "*Battle of Orlov*" ("*Orlovskaia Bitva*"), *Pravda*, September 6, 1943, 4.
[89] Overy, *Russia's War*, 217.

to make sure to film as much dramatic footage of Nazi atrocities and destruction as the Red Army liberated large swaths of territory that had been under German administration. Vasil'chenko sent a telegram reminding all the heads of the country's frontline filmmaking groups to have cameramen record the most horrific acts of the Nazis for the ChGK, providing specific instructions on what to record: the destruction caused by the Nazis to Soviet industrial, personal, and cultural property, atrocities committed against the Soviet people including the places of murder and shots of the dead and of the survivors, and all manner of German propaganda disseminated on Soviet occupied territory. Frontline filmmaking groups were instructed to convey Nazi barbarism in the most graphic manner, through panoramic and close-up shots of Gestapo facilities, the bodies of the dead and survivors, German POW camps, moments when ordinary people recognized their murdered loved ones and friends, children whose parents were killed, and mothers who had lost their children to Nazi occupation. Vasil'chenko explained the importance of producing the footage in the following way: "One of the most important tasks of frontline cameramen in those regions freed by the Red Army is to record on film proof of the evils and destruction committed by the Nazi-Fascist occupiers. It is necessary to explain to the entire collective of cameramen that recording the facts of the crimes of the Hitlerites is a duty of utmost importance for cameramen to follow. This film reportage is a document of state importance."[90]

Vasil'chenko also made clear his commitment to identifying the war's major battles, chronological order, and periodization. As part of the process of creating an official history of the war, he called on a more systematized approach to identifying historically significant footage to become part of the official historical record of the war. He was gravely concerned about "the absence of scientifically worked out criteria, which would determine that nature of material" which

[90] Letter from Vasil'chenko to the heads of frontline filmmaking groups, September 8, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 112, l. 8–9, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 378.

should be chosen as being part of the official historical record of the war and that as a result, the archived film collection of the war "sometimes contained material not having historic significance." Calling for "radically improving" the official historical film record of the war, he demanded the systematization of the entire film collection built up so far of the Great Patriotic War by a professional group of experts according to an officially approved periodization of the war.[91]

On October 22, 1943, Bol'shakov sided with Vasil'chenko and issued a resolution within the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, "On actions to improve the work of systematizing the film record of the war." An editorial collegial commission within the Main Administration for Documentary Filmmaking was set up. The commission was to consist of a wide range of Soviet experts who would decide what kinds of footage were historically significant enough and of adequate quality to be labelled as being part of the country's official film record of the war. The Committee for Cinematographic Affairs appointed to the committee Vasil'chenko, Dovzhenko, Kopalin, Boltianskii, and Izrail' Razgon (professor of history at Moscow State University). Bol'shakov also decided that every three months, 10,000 meters of film stock would be set aside exclusively for the purpose of producing film chronicle material. Half of it, 5,000 meters, would be of high-quality foreign origin for "particularly significant footage" (*osobenno otvetstvennye s'emki*). Vasil'chenko was responsible with coming up with a system of classification for incoming film material to be catalogued as part of the official film chronicle of the war. Finally, the number

[91] From a speech made by Vasil'chenko at a meeting of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, "About the condition of the film chronicle of the Great Patriotic War," September 14, 1943, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 831, l. 65–71, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 379–83.

of workers employed by the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking to handle, sort, label, and archive incoming film material was increased to ten individuals.[92]

"Liberating" Ukraine with Dramatic and Varied Film Material, October 1943–February 1944

Meanwhile, the months of September to November 1943 saw the Red Army battling to cross the Dnepr and retake Kiev.[93] On October 1, 1943, Katsman instructed Fedor Kiselev, the head of the filmmaking group serving on the Central Front, to require his cameramen to shoot as much diverse raw footage as possible depicting in a dramatic manner not only "the fighting in Kiev, the taking of Kiev, the forcing of the Dnepr, and the freeing of Kiev" but also "the traces of abuses committed against Kievites, the Ukrainian intelligentsia, service personnel and workers." He also called on Kiselev to order cameramen to amass footage of the German occupation of the city, including the places of torture of the population, by the Gestapo, and in prisons.[94]

Three weeks later, on October 25, 1943, the full-length documentary *Battle for Our Soviet Ukraine* (*Bitva za nashu Sovetskuiu Ukrainu*) directed by Dovzhenko and Iuliia Solntseva was released. The Party made sure to publicize the film in *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* and draw attention to the film's highly moving footage that made the film an artistic achievement and unforgettable. *Pravda* had Soviet author Nikolai Tikhonov review the film on October 20, 1943. According to Tikhonov, the film was a "burning chronicle of great rage" that "rose to the heights of a historical document of great significance" due to its impressive footage chosen and assembled by

[92] Decree by the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, "Regarding Improvements to the Systematization of the Documentary *Kinoletopis'*," October 22, 1943, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 831, l. 62–63, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 383–84.
[93] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 172-175.
[94] Directive sent by Katsman to Kiselev, October 1, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, no opis' provided, d. 118, l. 61–63, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 591–92.

Dovzhenko, where shots of peaceful life of Ukrainians before the war and the heroism and sacrifice of the Ukrainian people, the partisans, and the Red Army were juxtaposed against the crimes committed by the Nazis in Ukraine. He added that the dramatic footage served to remind viewers in the Soviet Union and around the world to "never forget, and never forgive" the Germans. [95] I. Bachelis in *Izvestiia* wrote, "rarely had a documentary film reached such artistic power." He called the film's footage "documents" (*dokumenty*) and a "chronicle" (*khronika*) of the war effort.[96]

The film's shots of Ukraine before the war followed by footage of the destruction and crimes committed by the Nazis left an impression on international film critics. The review in *The New York Times* from April 3, 1944 referred to the film's footage of the horrors committed by the Nazis in Ukraine as heartrending and the footage of Ukraine in peace time as moving. The "face of the civilians, old and young, etched with sorrow, defiance, and courage" made the film a "vital document." By contrast, the reviewer was not impressed with the film's battle sequences, already included in newsreels, which were of poor quality and had taken on "a distressing similarity."[97] The positive reviews by domestic and international film critics of the film's varied non-combat footage must have once again proven to Soviet leaders and film administrators the correctness of their course to produce large amounts of diverse and dramatic material of the war effort and cataloguing and archiving the material as the country's official film record (*kinoletopis'*) of the war.

The Red Army retook Kiev in the first week of November 1943 in time for the annual celebration of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Red Army's entrance into Kiev was marked with a display of fireworks in Moscow. On November 7, Molotov threw an extravagant party with

[95] Nikolai Tikhonov, "Battle for Our Soviet Ukraine" ("Bitva za nashu Sovetskuiu Ukrainu"), *Pravda*, October 20, 1943, 2.
[96] I. Bachelis, "Battle for Our Soviet Ukraine" ("Bitva za nashu Sovetskuiu Ukrainu"), *Izvestiia*, October 22, 1943, 3.
[97] T.M.P., "The Screen: At the Stanley," *The New York Times*, April 3, 1944, 18.

diplomats in attendance.[98] The Red Army was poised to advance into western Ukraine. Twenty of the Soviet Union's most experienced frontline cameramen were to amass a range of footage of the Red Army's advance into western Ukraine. Dovzhenko was invited to choose and assemble the most vivid footage for a full-length documentary film that would present an official Party narrative of the "liberation" of Ukraine. Vasil'chenko instructed cameramen to produce footage of the Soviet Union's last days at war on a number of themes that had been underrepresented in newsreels. He placed frontline filmmaking groups on special assignment and provided detailed instructions (*zadaniia*) and thematic plans (*tematicheskie plany*) about what kinds of material to shoot, including more shots of Stalin and his importance and role in the Great Patriotic War,[99] the everyday life of Soviet soldiers on the frontline, the crimes caused by the Nazis, the Party's leading role at the front and in the rear, Soviet youth, the Red Army's high generals, life in the navy and amongst the partisans, the Slavic Committee, religion in the USSR, Soviet science, foreign military units in the USSR, the nature of the enemy, anti-fascist immigrants in the USSR, and Soviet art.[100]

In a letter from *Glavkinokhronika* on December 2, 1943 to the leaders of the frontline film groups, Vasil'chenko explained to frontline cameramen the footage had to be recorded because it was "of an extremely valuable nature for the history of the Great Patriotic War," to be included as part of the official film record of the war. "These materials will in the future be film documents of enormous power, reflecting in a truthful form all of the glory of the struggle of the Soviet people against the German-Fascist occupiers, with all of their difficulties." Local documentary studios

[98] Overy, *Russia's War*, 219-220.
[99] According to Werth, with victory at Stalingrad, the myth of Stalin's military genius was solidified (*Russia at War*, 585–98).
[100] Instructional letter from Vasil'chenko to all head of frontline filmmaking groups, December 2, 1943, RGALI, f. 2451, op. 1, d. 186, l. 15–16ob., as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na voine*, 755.

throughout the Soviet Union were also instructed with producing memorable film material to become part of the official film record of the war effort.[101]

Vasil'chenko also called for ever more raw footage shot in the most graphic manner of the horrible acts committed by the Germans in the Soviet Union: "the most horrible, the most painful, without regard to ethical standards."[102] He wanted to ensure the Soviet Union had more than enough footage of Nazi crimes on hand to serve as a persuasive, historical and legal record of German crimes and as proof of the moral and ethical high ground of the Soviet Union.

Liberating Europe with Dramatic and Varied Film Material and Organizing the Soviet Union's Vast Film Record of the War Effort, May 1944–July 1945

In February 1944 the Red Army had retaken Leningrad and by the end of April most of the Ukraine had been retaken by the Soviets. The Red Army now was near the Romanian frontier, at the gates of Europe.[103] In a speech on May 1, 1944, Stalin made clear that the Soviet Union's intentions to not only liberate the Soviet Union but all of Europe from German occupation. "The wounded German beast must be pursued close on its heels and finished off in its own lair. And while pursuing the enemy, we must deliver from German bondage our brother Poles, Czechoslovaks, and other peoples of Western Europe allied with us which are under the heel of Hitlerite Germany."[104]

The Party rushed to make sure its documentary filmmaking efforts were up to the task to record and present in a dramatic and memorable way the Soviet liberation of Europe from Nazi rule. In May 1944, the Central Committee took several steps to focus its attention to better produce

[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid., 757.
[103] Overy, *Russia's War*, 236.
[104] Stalin, *War Speeches*, 94.

dramatic and varied film material to be included in full-length documentary films devoted to the final days of the war. It issued a resolution demoting newsreel production based mostly on combat footage. The production of the *Soiuzkinozhurnal* series was terminated. In its place, a general newsreel series called *The News of the Day* (*Novosti dnia*) was established and the Committee introduced another newsreel series, called *Frontline Film Issues* (*Frontovye kinovypuski*).[105]

In the same resolution, the Party took direct control over the administration of Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts. The Main Administration for Documentary Filmmaking (*Glavkinokhronika*) would be replaced by the Main Studio for Documentary Films (TsSDF), with the new entity under the direct control of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs. Finally, the Party appointed the feature film director Sergei Gerasimov to replace Vasil'chenko as head of the newly formed TsSDF. Gerasimov would also serve as deputy head of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs.[106]

Meanwhile, in mid-July, the Soviets rapidly advanced through Poland.[107] The Red Army would soon advance into East Prussia. On July 18, 1944, the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs met to discuss the condition of film material on hand and to reaffirm its commitment to "create from all of the footage produced a systematized collection reflecting the film history of the Great Patriotic War." The Party took steps to further ensure the film record on hand and the anticipated thousands of meters of film material it hoped to produce of the final stages of the war be systematized and safeguarded so that it could be serve as a "film history" (*kinoistoriia*) of the war in the post-war period. The process would include the "correct periodization of the history of

[105] Resolution of the Orgburo of the Central Committee "About the production of newsreels and documentary films," May 14, 1944, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 117, d. 409, l. 105–07, as reprinted in ibid., 770. I have found no evidence of the *Frontline Film Issues* (*Frontovye kinovypuski*) though when searching the electronic film archive of RGAKFD.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Overy, *Russia's War*, 244.

the Fatherland war" (*pravil'naia periodizatsiia istorii Otechestvennoi voiny*) according to guidelines setup by Stalin.[108]

Esfir' Shub along with a small group of assistants had been busy systematizing the official film record of the war that had been archived from the second half of the war. By July 1944, Shub and her colleagues had classified and systematized 53,000 meters of footage covering the first period of the war from June 22, 1941 to November 5, 1941. According to the Central Committee, the amount of film material on hand from the second part of the war though was far greater: 311,000 meters, of which 100,000 had been systematized by Shub and her team.[109]

Shub was aware that the process of systematizing the film record of the second half of the war would take much longer and be more arduous because there was so much more of the footage on hand. During a meeting of the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs on July 18, 1944, she called on film administrators to provide her three more individuals to help with sorting through the material. She also called for the editorial collegial commission responsible for choosing footage to include as part of the official historical record of the war to take its work more seriously and include only the most important and interesting footage. [110]

Finally, she along with Bol'shakov suggested that it be renamed the scientific council. Bol'shakov agreed and upped the number of Shub's group by three and appointed her to personally head the project of identifying, systematizing, cataloging, and storing the country's archived film record of the war.[111] The Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking renamed the editorial

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[108] Addendum to a meeting of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, "About the Condition of the *Kinoletopis'* of the Fatherland War," July 18, 1944, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 923, l. 135–40, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 397.
[109] Ibid.
[110] From a Transcript of a meeting of the Committee of Cinematographic Affairs, "About the Condition of the *Kinoletopis'* of the Fatherland War," July 18, 1944, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 923, l. 143–48, as reprinted in Fomin, *Kino na Voine*, 763–64.
[111] Ibid.

collegial commission for the war-time film record set up in 1943 into the scientific council of the film chronicle of the Great Patriotic War on August 22, 1944. Shub would be part of the council along with a team of film and non-film experts: Gerasimov, Boltianskii, I. Mints, Razgon, Platonov, N. Zamiatin, and Kopalin. [112] Finally, the actual physical archive where the film chronicle material of the war would be stored would be improved from simply a place of storage to one where specialists could have easy access to material and be able to study the long-term survival and storage of the archived film material.[113]

Meanwhile, the Soviet government encountered stiff resistance to the Red Army's occupation of Western Ukraine, with guerillas fighting Soviet power and a local population hostile to communist rule.[114] To sway local public opinion, starting in the summer of 1944, the Party began exhibiting Soviet war-time documentaries in such cities as Rovno, L'viv, and Chernivtsy: *Tragedy in the Katyn' Forest* (*Tragediia v Katynskom lesu*, 1944) directed by Posel'skii, *Battle for Our Soviet Ukraine*, *The Court Is in Session* (*Sud idet,* 1943),[115] *The Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow*, *Stalingrad*, and the *Battle of Orlov*.[116]

The Soviet leadership was also intent on producing and exhibiting to the world a memorable and dramatic official Soviet narrative of the liberation of Europe by the Red Army. Yet, the Red Army was advancing at a tremendous pace, ten to fifteen miles per day through Romania and Bulgaria. Soviet cameramen produced footage in a rushed manner.[117] The result was

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[112] As cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 804.
[113] Addendum to a meeting of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, "About the Condition of the *Kinoletopis'* of the Fatherland War," July 18, 1944, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 923, l. 135–40, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 398.
[114] Overy, *Russia's War*, 311-312.
[115] No information provided by RGAKFD about the director of the film.
[116] See, for example, the instructions to the Communist party of Ukraine on ensuring that mass-political work be conducted with screenwriters during film festivals, July 12, 1944, Central State Archive of the Highest Organs of Government and Administration of Ukraine (TsDAVO), f. 4733, op. 1, d. 37, l. 14.
[117] See, Semin, *Ne Zabyto!*, 64-65, as cited by Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 876-877 and Abram Krichevskii, TsGMK, f. 14, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 857-860.

that the Soviets' first "liberation" films of Romania and Bulgaria, *The Entrance of the Red Army into Bucharest* (*Vstuplenie Krasnoi Armii v Bukharest*) directed by Kopalin and *Entrance of the Red Army into Bulgaria* (*Vstuplenie Krasnoi Armii v Bulgariiu,* 1944) directed by M. Fideleva were much shorter in length than previous Soviet full-length documentaries, approximately ten to thirty minutes long versus an hour or more on average for previous full-length documentaries.[118]

In the meantime, in September 1944, the Soviet leadership was publicizing the death camps the Red Army had encountered in Belorussia, western Ukraine, Lithuania, and Poland.[119] *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* published reports of the proceedings and work of the ChGK as well as the various forms of evidence produced.[120] The first camp liberated and filmed by the Soviets was the Majdanek concentration camp near Lublin, Poland, in July 1944. An experienced film crew, directed by Karmen (who was sent specifically because of his experience and talent), filmed the footage.[121] As part of the Polish-Soviet Extraordinary Commission for the Investigation of Atrocities Committed in the Death Camp, Soviet cameramen shot over twenty hours' worth of footage (3,000 meters) at Majdanek. A special-issue film called *Majdanek* directed by Irina Setkina was released chronicling the discovery of the camp and explaining its function to Soviet and world audiences.[122] In September 23, 1944, the Council of People's Commissars set aside 150,000 meters

[118] RGAKFD, 5015, *Vstuplenie Krasnoi Armii v Bukharest*, 1944 and 5033, *Vstuplenie Krasnoi Armii v Bulgariiu,* 1944.
[119] See, for instance, "The Blood of 1,500,000 Killed at Majdanek Calls for Revenge!" ("Krov' 1,500,000 ubitykh na Maidaneke vopiet o mshchenii!"), *Izvestiia,* September 16, 1944, 1.
[120] See D. Kudriavtsev, "Communique of the Polish-Soviet Extraordinary Commission Regarding the Investigation of the Atrocities the Germans Committed in the Majdanek Extermination Camp in the City of Lublin" ("Kommiunike Pol'sko-Sovetskoi Chrezvychainoi Komissii po rassledovaniiu zlodeianii nemtsev, sovershennykh v lagere unichtozheniia na Maidaneke v gorode Liublin"), *Pravda,* September 16, 1944, 2.
[121] Hicks, *First Films of the Holocaust*, 157.
[122] RGAKFD, 5193, *kinofil'm, Maidanek*, 1944, directed by I. Setkina; 10856, *kinoletopis', Maidanek,* 1944, no dir.; and 11043, *kinoletopis', Sud nad palachami Maidaneka,* 1944, no dir.

of film stock strictly for use by the ChGK to further document the atrocities the had Germans committed in the Soviet Union and in Europe.[123]

At the end of September, the Red Army had reached the outskirts of Warsaw and the border with Hungary. The Red Army encountered resistance from the Germans that slowed its advance.[124] Soviet leaders, film administrators, cameramen, and filmmakers were in a better position to chronicle the Red Army's entrance into Warsaw and Budapest, which would form the basis of full-length documentaries devoted to the Soviet liberations of Hungary and Poland.[125]

In the case of Warsaw, in anticipation of the Red Army advancing into the city and based on a Soviet radio message calling on Poles to rise up against the Nazis, the residents of Warsaw began an uprising to drive the Germans out of the city on August 1, 1944. The Red Army was located outside the city but did not come to the aid of residents.[126] The result was that by October 2, 1944, the uprising was crushed by the Germans, almost a million residents died, and the city was virtually leveled to the ground. Soviet leaders then instructed cameramen stationed with the Red Army to film prescribed footage on a range of topics as they entered Warsaw for a full-length documentary entitled *Warsaw* (*Varshava*, 1944)[127] that would emphasize the critical role of the Red Army to the defeat of the Germans, the liberation of Warsaw by the Red Army (much of

[123] Directive by the Council of People's Commissars, September 23, 1944, RGALI, f. 2456, op. 1, d. 93, l. 108, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 806.
[124] Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, 233-241.
[125] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 241–42, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 865–66; Semin, *Ne Zabyto!*, 73, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 869; and the dope sheet of Viktor Muromtsev while filming in Yugoslavia, no date, no location provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 884–86.
[126] Why the Soviets did not help the residents of Warsaw remains a matter of dispute amongst historians. See Werth, *Russia at War*, 867–83.
[127] No director provided for the film in RGAKFD.

which was reenacted),[128] close ups of Poles surviving German occupation, and the war crimes of the Germans.[129]

In fall 1944, Soviet film administrators planned to produce a variety of memorable film material of the Soviets entering Germany, defeating Nazi Germany, and liberating Berlin. On October 17, 1944, Troianovskii, in a letter to Bol'shakov, spoke about the "historical importance" (*istoricheskaia znachimost'*) of the Red Army sweeping into Nazi Germany. Troianovskii asked for Bol'shakov's personal involvement to make sure that large amounts of be shot for a sweeping film of the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany. Signaling once again the importance of including wide-ranging footage, particularly close-ups of people, in the film, Troianovskii called on cameramen to emulate the variety of footage and close-ups contained in the documentary film *Desert Victory* (1943), produced under the auspices of the British Ministry of Information and directed by Roy Boulting. [130]

In November 1944, Stalin called for presenting a Soviet narrative of victory in the war in which it was the "selfless struggle of the Soviet people" that "saved the civilization of Europe from the fascist vandals."[131] To ensure Stalin's vision, film administrators in Moscow upped the number of cameramen working on shooting raw footage of the Soviet advance into the heart of Germany to the largest number involved in all frontline film projects during the war—over twenty individuals.[132]

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[128] From the dope sheets of Karmen for the film *Warsaw*, no date, no location provided, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 853–54.
[129] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 236–37, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 849–50.
[130] Troianovskii, *S vekom naravne*, 198–99, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 911–12.
[131] Speech at Celebration Meeting of the Moscow Soviet of Working People's Deputies and Moscow Party and Public Organizations, November 6, 1944, in Stalin, *War Speeches*, 110.
[132] Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 904.

By late April, the Red Army, having captured East Prussia, Pomerania, and Brandenburg, was now in Berlin.[133] On May 8, the Germans surrendered to the Soviet Union and the Allies in Berlin. The Soviet leadership announced victory over Nazi Germany May 9.[134] The same day, Raizman flew to Moscow to assemble a film from the 30,000 meters of Soviet film material and 20,000 meters of German trophy film material, or the equivalent of 250,000 shots. Raizman and his team crafted the film *Berlin* from nine hundred shots. The majority of the raw footage was placed in the state archive to be added to the official film record of the war,[135] which meant the Party had thousands of meters of moving, varied, and vetted film material of the Soviet "liberation" of Berlin.[136]

In the meantime, on May 12, 1945, *Victory on the Right Bank of Ukraine* (*Pobeda na pravoberezhnoi Ukraine*, 1945) co-directed by Dovzhenko, Solntseva, and Fedor Filippov, was released in the Soviet Union.[137] Dovzhenko and his film team had skillfully put together a variety of footage to tell a moving story of Ukraine at war, juxtaposing the evils of the Nazis with the moral high ground occupied by the Soviets. The film included close-up shots of German POWs, liberated Ukrainian cities and people, grieving mothers and children, Ukrainian people rebuilding after liberation, Soviet military personnel, leaders, and ordinary soldiers during intimate moments in between fighting, and dramatic footage of Soviet soldiers crossing the Dnieper and advancing against the Germans. Other powerful images included ordinary moments of Soviet and German soldiers smoking, sleeping, eating, being bandaged by nurses, working under brutal field

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[133] Overy, *Russia's War*, 272.
[134] Ibid., 280.
[135] Lebedev and Rymarev, *Ikh oruzhie—kinokamera*, 271, as reprinted in Fomin, *Tsena kadra*, 978.
[136] The archived footage includes over two hours of material of the Germany city Breslau in the final days of the war, including the funeral of the Soviet cameraman Nikolai Bykov, who was killed while filming the Red Army's advance at Breslau. See RGAKFD, 10932, *kinoletopis', Boi za Breslau*, 1945; 11087 1, *kinoletopis', Pokhorony kinooperatora Bykova*, 1945; and 11140, *kinoletopis', Breslau/Vozdushnaia S'emka*, 1945.
[137] Fionov, *Sovetskoe kino v datakh i faktakh*, 167, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930-1945*, 821.

conditions of bombardment and transporting military equipment in deep mud and pools of water, and being killed in action. Film administrators had also made sure the film contained a great deal of close-ups of Red Army generals, officers, and political figures, conveying to audiences the important role of Stalin and other top political figures and Red Army leaders to the victory in Ukraine, and footage focusing on the rebuilding of Ukraine's economy and society after the war.[138]

On June 26, 1945, *Berlin* was released to coincide with the day Stalin received the title Generalissimo for his leadership in the war and a second medal of honor for steering the country to victory.[139] The reviews of the film's images were again very positive amongst both international and domestic critics for their dramatic nature, their honesty, and their historic importance. *The New York Times*, in its review from September 28, 1945, wrote that the film contained powerful images that captured "the horror, devastation and human carnage of this stubborn defense of the enemy's last bastion." The reviewer stressed that it was not the "copious newsreel material seen heretofore, familiar and strangely short on impact," but rather the simple yet powerful images of the struggle for survival and the horrific impact of the war such as "the mute testimony to hunger as evidence in the vignette of a lone burgher slashing a bit of flesh from the carcass of a horse," the skillful use of captured German footage "showing thousands of Berliners greeting Hitler, quickly followed by a current scene depicting thousands of upraised hands begging for bread," and the "pictures of the charred corpse of Goebbels" that had the greatest impact. The reviewer, called it an historical document "irrefutable and necessary" and a "forceful lesson for this and coming generations." [140]

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[138] RGAKFD, 5204, *Pobeda na Pravoberezhnoi Ukraine)*, 1945.
[139] Fionov, *Sovetskoe kino v datakh i faktakh*, 168, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino*, 823.
[140] A.W., "The Screen in Review: At the Victoria," *The New York Times*, September 28, 1945, 16.

Reviews by Party approved film critics of the film and its footage were also very positive, stressing that the film and its footage served as historically genuine documents that needed to be reshown to future generations. On June 27, 1945, Soviet writer Vadim Kozhevnikov, writing in the party approved newspaper *Pravda*, praised the footage in the film for being rich and that the feature filmmaker Raizman had skillfully put together Soviet and German film material to convey to audiences the "historical essence" of what had taken place in Berlin.[141] General-Major P. Vershigor, in his review for the government approved newspaper *Izvestiia* from July 4, 1945, said of the film's footage that it captured the spirit of the grand historical events that had taken place and that the material was so memorable it would be watched again and again by young audiences in the future.[142] The footage and the film itself glorified the Red Army, vilified the Nazi regime, and romanticized the Soviet liberation of Germany. The reality of liberation in Germany was that the Red Army had committed terrible crimes such as rape and the burning and pillaging of German towns and cities as a form of revenge and the Soviets were imposing their will on the country and its people.[143]

Soviet leaders were intent on displaying *Berlin* to German and European audiences as quickly as possible to demonstrate the Soviet Union as a moral and just victor in the war. As early as July 1945, the cinema Actualité-Cinéphone in Paris presented *Berlin* to French audiences.[144] In August 1945, *Berlin* was screened to German audiences in the Soviet-occupied zone. The film was submitted by the Soviet Union to the first post-war Italian international film festival on September 22, 1945.[145] The Cannes Film Festival in France in September 1946 opened with a screening of

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[141] Vadim Kozhevnikov, "Berlin," *Pravda*, June 27, 1945, 3.
[142] P. Vershigor, "Berlin," *Izvestiia,* July 4, 1945, 3.
[143] For an excellent newer treatment of the Soviet zone of occupation in Germany see, Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945–1949* (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995).
[144] P. Ia., *Russkie novosti*, July 13, 1945, as cited in Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 824.
[145] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 827, 829.

Berlin. More than once, the film received a standing ovation. The film would garner top prize at the film festival for best full-length documentary. [146]

Ten days after the release of the film, on July 6, 1945, the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs issued a decree liquidating the frontline filmmaking division within the Central Studio for Documentary Filmmaking.[147] Yet, Soviet leaders were far from done with the varied, dramatic, and memorable war-time film material they had amassed. Back in Moscow, the scientific council of the official film chronicle of the war was busy cataloguing, systematizing, and archiving thousands of meters of film material for the post-war period.

Using the Diverse and Memorable Film Record of the Soviet War Effort in the Immediate Post-War Years and Beyond

November 1945 saw the start of the Nuremberg Trials, at which the Soviets, along with the other war-time allies, began trying Nazis for war crimes.[148] The Soviet government ordered its best filmmakers to produce three full-length documentaries to be exhibited as evidence at the trials. Showcasing the critical nature of the project to the Party, head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, Aleksandrov, was personally involved in the project. Soviet filmmakers relied heavily on the diverse war-time film record held by RGAKFD dealing with German war crimes as the basis of the films.[149] On December 17, 1945, Aleksandrov and Bol'shakov sent a joint report about the status of the project to the secretary of the Communist Party, Malenkov, in which they informed

[146] "Midi-Soir," *Marseilles*, September 21, 1946, as cited in Fomin, *Tsena Kadra*, 1038.
[147] Deriabin et al, *Letopis' Rossiiskogo kino, 1930–1945*, 825.
[148] Francine Hirsch, "The Soviets at Nuremberg: International Law, Propaganda, and the Making of the Postwar Order," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (June 2008), 701-730.
[149] Memorandum from Aleksandrov and Bol'shakov to Malenkov about preparations being made for the production of three documentary films for the Nuremberg Trials, December 17, 1945, RGALI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 373, l. 235, as reprinted in ibid., 834.

Malenkov that they had begun choosing dramatic footage shot by the country's most esteemed cameramen and filmmakers and taken from non-Soviet sources to include in the three films.[150]

The speed with which Soviet filmmakers were able to create the three films I would suggest was a testament to the enormous amount of work and attention that had gone into amassing, cataloguing, and systematizing the documentary film material amassed and archived during the war. Less than a month after the project had begun, on January 13, 1946, the three films were completed, reviewed, and given the green light by Konstantin Gorshenin, the new prosecutor general of the Soviet Union and member of the Secret Commission for Directing the Nuremberg Trials. The films were screened during the Nuremberg Trials on February 19–22, 1946.[151]

In the years that followed, the Soviet leadership would return to the war experience as represented by its vast official film record. Soviet leaders and film administrators reshowed Soviet war-time full length documentaries to the Ukrainian population, especially in the republic's western regions,[152] during the spring sowing campaign, the fall harvest, Soviet elections, and Soviet anniversaries and holidays.[153] During local Ukrainian elections held in 1947, the following

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[150] *Film Documents about the Barbarism of German-Fascist Occupiers* (*Kinodokumenty o zverstvakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov*, 1945); *Destruction Caused by the Germans on the Territory of the Soviet Union* (*Razrusheniia, proizvedennye nemtsami na territorii Sovetskogo Soiuza*, 1946), dir. by Maria Slavinskaia; and *The Destruction of Cultural Monuments of the Peoples of the USSR by the Germans* (*Razrusheniia proizvedenii iskusstva i pamiatnikov natsiaonal'noi kul'tury, proizvedennye nemtsami na territorii SSSR*, 1946), dir. S. Bubrik. See RGAKFD, 6820, *Kinodokumenty o zverstvakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov*, 1945; RGAKFD, 6800, *Razrusheniia, proizvedennye nemtsami na territorii Sovetskogo Soiuza* 1946; and RGAKFD, 6807, *Razrusheniia proizvedenii iskusstva i pamiatnikov natsiaonal'noi kul'tury, proizvedennye nemtsami na territorii SSSR*, 1946.

[151] *Film Documents about the Barbarism of German-Fascist Occupiers* was renamed *The Atrocities by the German Fascist Invaders in the USSR*, and shown February 19, 1946 as exhibit number USSR-81; *The Destruction of Cultural Monuments of the Peoples of the USSR by the Germans*, renamed *The Destruction of Art and Museums of National Culture Perpetrated by the Germans on the Territory of the USSR*, was screened February 21, 1946 as exhibit number USSR-98; and *Destruction Caused by the Germans on the Territory of the Soviet Union*, renamed *On the Destruction Perpetrated by the Germans on the Territories of the Soviet Union*, was exhibited February 22, 1946 as exhibit number USSR-401. Taken from Kevin P. Reynolds, "That Justice Be Seen: The American Prosecution's Use of Film in the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sussex, 2012), Appendix 1.

[152] An armed anti-Soviet insurrection had been underway in the western regions of Ukraine, whose people were only recently forcibly incorporated in the USSR on the eve of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. The insurrection would only completely be put down by Soviet authorities in the late 1940s.

[153] From Koval', head of the regional division for cinefication, to Aleksandr S. Kuznetsov, minister of cinematography of the Ukrainian SSR, about the work of the film network within the cinefication division of the Poltava executive

Soviet war-time documentaries were shown: *Stalingrad, Defeat of German-Fascist Forces near Moscow, Defeat of Japan (Razgrom Iaponii, 1945)* directed by Aleksandr Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits, *People's Avengers, Berlin, Battle of Sevastopol (Bitva za Sevastopol', 1944)* directed by Beliaev, and *Battle for Our Soviet Ukraine*.[154]

In Red Army-occupied Europe, the Soviets showed war-time full length documentaries to local populations in the immediate post-war years for example in Germany[155] and Romania,[156] thereby attempting to inculcate local populations with an official Soviet narrative of the war. The Soviet Union made sure the United States was supplied copies of Soviet war-time full-length documentaries in the immediate post-war period to try to ensure the American public could be introduced to and reminded of the Soviet official history of the war.[157] In Western Europe, the Soviet Union also made it a priority to reach audiences with its most important war-time full-length documentaries, to provide an official Soviet narrative of its war effort on the Eastern Front

committee of the regional Soviet of workers' deputies for film exhibition during the sowing campaign of 1947, April 17, 1947, TsDAVO, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 37, l. 9–10; Report about the film festival commemorating the harvest campaign in the Drogobychskaia region, August 4, 1947, TsDAVO, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 39, l. 19; From the deputy head of the Committee for Cinematographic Affairs, Mikhail Khripunov to the secretary of the Central Committee, Grigorii Malenkov, providing a list of the films recommended to be shown during the preparations and conducting of elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, November 29, 1945, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 373, l. 182–87; and, To the head of the cinefication division in the Ministry of Cinematography of the USSR from the head of the regional division for cinefication, Babenko and the head of the operational department, Davydov, presenting a report about the films exhibited to the population in the period of preparations and during celebrations of the 30th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, November 11, 1947, TsDAVO, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 37, l. 37–39.

[154] List of relevant Soviet film to be demonstrated in preparation for electing workers' deputies to the local Soviets, 1947, TsDAVO, f. 4623, op. 1, d. 38, l. 14.

[155] Report from the head of the informational division of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany, colonel S. Tiul'panov about Soviet film propaganda in Germany to the head of the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, Georgii Aleksandrov, August 8, 1947, RGASPI, f. 17, op. 125, d. 576, l. 34.

[156] Report about the exhibition of Soviet films in Romania, from administrator Petr Brigadnov with the All-Union Film Trust for the Export and Import of Films (*Soiuzeksportfil'm*) to Vasilii Stepanov with the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, January 6, 1947, RGASPI, f. 17, d. 125, op. 469, l. 134.

[157] See the Brandon Catalog of Films of the USSR produced by Brandon Films Inc., located in New York City, from 1945, advertising the rental, sale, and lease of Soviet film titles, including a full page devoted to the Soviet war-time documentary films produced discussed in this Chapter, GARF, f. 5283, op. 14, d. 339, 91–93ob.

that they owed their freedom to Soviet efforts and the Soviet system, which was superior to that of the capitalist West.[158]

Within the Soviet Union, in the years following the end of the war, the Party continued to rely on its vast and diverse film record created during the war, reshowing war-time documentaries but also producing new documentary films about the war based on archived footage to keep the memory of the war alive for future generations. The archived war-time film material was employed by the Party to produce over 2,000 documentary films, newsreels, and shorts from 1946–91 that, in one way or another, touched upon the Soviet war-time experience.[159]

Conclusion

In committing itself to producing a vast store of diverse and dramatic film material of the war effort, distinct from combat footage and newsreels, material to be archived and to be included in full-length war-time documentaries (*polno-metrazhnye dokumental'nye fil'my*), Soviet leaders and film administrators ensured they had a rich body of footage and films on hand that the regime could use to sway domestic and international audiences during the war and in the post-war period with memorable and moving Soviet images. The film material covered an expansive range of themes from close-up shots of the war crimes caused by the Nazis to intimate portraits of the Soviet people in war-time—the everyday life of soldiers, civilians, partisans, and even frontline cameramen. Yet, it must be remembered that Soviet record of the war though diverse and dramatic was state-sponsored propaganda. Film administrators and editors in Moscow instructed cameramen and film groups what and how to shoot and they reviewed cameramen's footage and

[158] See for example, the journal of the work of Soviet film groups in Sweden by A. Kharlamov, trainee of the USSR Mission in Sweden, March, 1945, exact date unknown, GARF, f. 5283, op. 20, d. 242, l. 60–62.
[159] See the online site for RGAKFD at http://rgakfd.ru/kinokat.htm by consulting the site's "electronic film catalog" (*elektronnyi kinokatalog*) and conducting a search (*poisk*) for the years 1946–91.

descriptions of footage (via dope sheets) sent to Moscow to check whether footage satisfied the Party, what footage should be discarded, and what should be categorized as film chronicle material (*kinoletopis'*). The full-length documentaries based on the film material, crafted by talented directors, underwent strict editorial reviews by film editors, administrators, and even Soviet leaders and self-censorship by cameramen and filmmakers to fit state requirements. As such, the resulting film material and films followed prescribed patterns, promoting an the state's interpretation and narrative of the war, emphasizing certain war-time episodes, individuals, turning points, objects, and places deemed significant due to political reasons, while whitewashing others.

Similar to the 1930s, to gauge whether its efforts with amassing dramatic and diverse film material were bearing fruit, Soviet leaders, film administrators, and editors closely followed the reception of their full-length documentaries produced on the basis of the footage both domestically and internationally. What they found was that the diverse film material included in full-length Soviet documentaries and being archived provided an intimate and moving portrait of the war. Lines routinely formed in Moscow, Leningrad, and other major cities in the Soviet Union to glimpse Soviet war-time documentary films. In the United States, judging by the lines outside movie houses in major cities where showings were routinely sold out, ordinary Americans too were interested in watching moving Soviet full-length documentaries. Critics in the United States were glowing in their assessments of Soviet war-time documentaries and their diverse and moving film material. Film critics and reviewers at home routinely praised the war-time film material being amassed and included in films. The Party and film administrators, seeing the great impact the footage and films were having on audiences and critics instructed cameramen to amass ever more varied and dramatic footage of the war effort to be archived and included in full-length documentaries.

During the war, Soviet leader and film administrators, listening to film experts, also took steps to classify, separate, and store the vast amount of film material it had produced according to specific guidelines and setting up an official commission headed by experts from a variety of fields. The Soviets relied on the film material to produce films to cover up embarrassing defeats during the war, to mobilize domestic and international audiences to support the Soviet war effort, to liberate Nazi occupied areas of the Soviet Union and Europe, to try Nazi war criminals during the Nuremberg Trials, and in the post-war years, and to tell and retell an official state-sponsored story of the Soviet Union's victory and sacrifices in the Great Patriotic War to domestic and international audiences.

I also hope my chapter will serve as the starting point for scholarly research and discussions comparing German, American, and Soviet documentary filmmaking efforts during the Second World War. I would venture to suggest that the Soviet government was in unique in its efforts of producing and using its vast, diverse, and dramatic film record of the war effort when compared to the United States. The U.S. government had shown little interest in Frank Capra's or other filmmakers' ideas of making the war the center of U.S. documentary filmmaking efforts. Only reluctantly through the conscious efforts of Capra did the U.S. government allow footage and films of the war effort to be shown to the American public. Moreover, the U.S. government had produced a much more sanitized version of the war effort for the American public to be included in the *Why We Fight Series*[160] and in newsreels than was the case with Soviet war-time film material.[161]

[160] *Why We Fight Series* consisted of *Prelude to War*, 1942; *The Nazis Strike*, 1943; *Divide and Conquer*, 1943; *The Battle of Britain*, 1943; *The Battle of Russia*, 1943; *The Battle of China*, 1944; and *War Comes to America*, 1944.
[161] For an excellent treatment of how five top U.S. filmmakers enlisted by the U.S. government to film World War II, unsuccessfully tried to make the war the center of U.S. filmmaking efforts in war-time, see Mark Harris, *Five Came Back: A Story of Hollywood and the Second World War* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2014).

The government of Nazi Germany on the other hand was much closer in its vision to that of the Soviet Union with its war-time documentary filmmaking efforts. The Nazi leadership had instructed its *Propaganda Kompanie Einheiten* (PK) cameramen to produce large amounts of diverse footage for the production of war-time newsreels and documentaries and to be archived for posterity. The aim was to instill the will to fight amongst the German people but also to remind Germans and world audiences with dramatic and memorable images of the German war effort once victory was achieved.[162] However, Nazi Germany lost the war and the regime ceased to exist, so it was unable to use its war-time film material for political gain in the post-war period as would the Soviet Union. Instead, the governments of the U.S., East Germany, West Germany, the Soviet Union and other countries who would rely on Nazi Germany's war-time film record to remind the world of the horrors of Naziism.

[162] David Welch, "Nazi Wartime Newsreel Propaganda," in *Film and Radio Propaganda in World War II*, ed. K.R.M. Short (Croom Helm: London & Canberra, 1983), 201–19.

Conclusion

My dissertation findings further our understanding of the development and operation of the Soviet filmmaking industry in several ways. First, I show that by the mid-1930s the Soviet Union operated an impressive documentary filmmaking industry. Its capabilities had greatly expanded compared with the 1920s in terms of the variety and the numbers of newsreels and documentaries being produced, the genre's domestic and international reach, the number of professional cadres being trained and employed, the number of studios operating, and the deep interest and involvement of Soviet leaders and institutions in the genre. I also point out the deficiencies of the industry in the 1930s. Soviet documentary films and newsreels became serious and formulaic in nature and the industry was continuously plagued with inefficiencies and drawbacks: over-centralization, bureaucracy, poor technology and infrastructure, heavy handed censorship, fear, and unrealistic targets, to name just a few, conspired in limiting the quality, quantity, and reach of Soviet documentary film output in the 1930s.

Second, I demonstrate that Stalinist documentary was not built and did not operate through a strictly top-down process in which Joseph Stalin or the Soviet leadership had all the ideas and answers[1] and where cadres and experts blindly followed the Party line.[2] Instead, it was Soviet leaders and film administrators together with input by experts and cadres who ensured the development, expansion, and operation of Soviet documentary in the 1930s and during the Second World War. Recent scholarship has emphasized expertise and active participation from below as

[1] For 'totalitarian' treatments see Rubailo, *Partiinoe rukovodstvo razvitiem kinoiskusstva* and Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema*.

[2] I disagree with the conclusions of Peter Kenez, who argues that "the profound changes that came about in Soviet film culture in the next few years were not the outcome of internal debate among filmmakers; these changes were imposed from the outside" either by the Party or by radical critics. See Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society*, 105 and 107. See also ibid., *Revolution to the Death of Stalin*, 123–24. When looking at documentary I have found that a diverse set of filmmakers, cameramen, film critics, and other experts, both young and old, domestic and foreign, came to shape and interpret the Party's vision for a mass Soviet cinema reaching millions at home and abroad.

being critical to the development and operation of Stalinism. Scholarship by Francine Hirsch, Stephen Kotkin, and Peter Konecny, among others, who go beyond the "totalitarian" and "revisionist" models of Stalinism show that the making of the Soviet Union under Stalin relied both on instructions, vision, and input from above but also input, initiative, and vision from below from experts and cadres—that it was "an interactive" and "participatory process."[3] I further the new historiography with more examples of the variety of input and initiative adopted by individuals with expertise, I provide additional reasons for why Soviet leaders and administrators tolerated input and initiative by individuals with know-how, and I demonstrate how and why home-grown ideas and practices by experts and cadres came to shape and alter the ways Soviet leaders and administrators ran the country's documentary filmmaking operations.

Third, and finally, my dissertation demonstrates that the Soviet process of creating an official narrative and history of the Great Patriotic War did not come about in the post-war period,[4] but rather began during the planning stages of the Battle of Moscow in the fall of 1941. As Soviet leaders, particularly Stalin, became confident that the war was about to turn in their favor, they instructed film administrators to produce large amounts of film material of much more varied and diverse nature than the war footage intended for Soviet newsreels, to be included in full-length commemorative documentary films and archived for posterity. The film material of the war would come to comprise the largest portion of all Soviet documentary film material produced during the war. With victory in the war, Soviet leaders would have on hand one of the world's largest film records of the Second World War, one that the regime would return to time and time again in the post-war period. My findings contribute to a new, growing body of academic scholarship

[3] For excellent treatments see Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, 5; Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 279; and Konecny, *Builders and Deserters*.
[4] See Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*.

emphasizing how, why, and when Soviet leaders created official narratives and histories of important events as the events unfolded.[5]

[5] See Corney, *Telling October* and Weiner, *Making Sense of War*.

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III. Audiovisual Primary Sources

a) Films

Aviamarsh (Aviation March). Directed by N. Kaufman. 1934. Filmstrip.

Ankara—serdtse Turtsii. Directed by Sergei Iutkevich. 1934. Filmstrip.

The Battle of Britain. 1943. Directed by Frank Capra. 1943. Filmstrip

The Battle of China. Directed by Frank Capra. 1944. Filmstrip

The Battle of Russia. Directed by Frank Capra. 1943. Filmstrip

Berlin. Directed by Iulii Raizman. 1945. Filmstrip.

Bitva za nashu Sovetskuiu Ukrainu (Battle for Our Soviet Ukraine). Directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko and Iuliia Solntseva. 1943. Filmstrip.

Bitva za Sevastopol' (Battle of Sevastopol). Directed by Vasilii Beliaev. 1944. Filmstrip.

Budem, kak Lenin (Let's Be Like Lenin). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii. 1939. Filmstrip.

Chapaev. Directed by Georgii and Sergei Vasiliev. 1934. Filmstrip.

Cheliuskin. Directed by Ia. Posel'skii. 1934. Filmstrip.

Chelovek s kinoapparatom (Man with a Movie Camera). Directed by Dziga Vertov. 1929. Filmstrip.

Chernomortsy (Black Sea Fleet Sailors). Directed by Vasilii Beliaev. 1942. Filmstrip.

Delo ob ekonomicheskoi kontrrevoliutsii v Donbasse (The Affair of the Economic Counter-Revolution in the Donbass). 1928. Filmstrip.

Den' Voiny (Day of War). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii. 1942. Filmstrip.

Divide and Conquer. Directed by Frank Capra. 1943. Filmstrip

Entuziazm: Simfoniia Donbassa (Enthusiasm: Symphony of the Donbass). Directed by Dziga Vertov. 1930. Filmstrip.

Imeni Lenina (Named after Lenin). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii. 1932. Filmstrip.

Spain in Flames. Directed by Helen van Dongen. 1937. Filmstrip.

Iunost' Maksima. Directed by Grigorii Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg. 1935.

Khalkhin-Gol. Directed by Il'ia Kopalin. 1940. Filmstrip.

Kinodokumenty o zverstvakh nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchikov (Film Documents about the Barbarism of German-Fascist Occupiers). 1945. Filmstrip.

Kirov. Directed by S. Gurov, L. Bliokh, and I. Setkina. 1935. Filmstrip.

Klavdiia Sakharova. Directed by Fedor Kiselev. 1938. Filmstrip.

Kolybel'naia (Lullaby). Directed by Dziga Vertov. 1937. Filmstrip.

Krasnaia armiia (Red Army). Directed by Il'ia Kopalin. 1939. Filmstrip.

Krasnye diavoliata (Red Devils). Directed by Ivan Perestiani. 1923. Filmstrip.

Leningrad v bor'be (Defense of Leningrad). Directed by Roman Karmen, I. Komartsev, Valerii Solovtsov, and Efim Uchitel'. 1942. Filmstrip.

Liniia Mannergeima (Mannerheim Line). Directed by Leonid Varlamov, Vasilii Beliaev, N. Komarevtsev, and Valerii Solovtsov. 1940. Filmstrip.

Majdanek. Directed by Irina Setkina. 1944. Filmstrip.

Moskva-Volga (Moscow-Volga). Directed by Rafail Gikov. 1937. Filmstrip.

Na Dunae (On the Danube). Directed by Il'ia Kopalin and Ia. Posel'skii. 1940. Filmstrip.

Na Severnom poliuse (At the North Pole). Directed by I. Vendzher and Ia. Posel'skii. 1937. Filmstrip.

Nachal'nik dorogi (Head of the Road). Directed by Fedor Kiselev. 1939. Filmstrip.

Narodnye mstiteli (The People's Avengers). Directed by Vasilii Beliaev and N. Komarevtsev. 1943. Filmstrip.

The Nazis Strike. Directed by Frank Capra. 1943. Filmstrip.

Odinadsat' stolits (Eleven Capitals). Directed by Rafail Gikov and L. Stepanova. 1939. Filmstrip.

Olympia. Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1938. Filmstrip.

Orlovskaia Bitva (The Battle of Orlov). Directed by Rafail Gikov and L. Stepanova. 1943. Filmstrip.

Osvobozhdenie (Liberation). Directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko. 1940. Filmstrip.

Osvobozhdenie Goroda Vilniusa (The Liberation of the City of Vilnius). Directed by Leonid Varlamov. 1944. Filmstrip.

Padenie dinastii Romanovykh (The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty). Directed by Esfir' Shub. 1927. Filmstrip.

Parad molodosti (Parade of Youth). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii and Fedor Kiselev. 1939. Filmstrip.

Pervomai (The First of May). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii and Fedor Kiselev. 1939. Filmstrip.

Po Krymu (Across Crimea). Directed by S. Posel'skii. 1939. Filmstrip.

Pobeda na pravobererzhnoi Ukraine (Victory on the Right Bank of Ukraine). Directed by Aleksandr Dovzhenko, Iuliia Solntseva, and Fedor Filippov. 1945. Filmstrip.

Pokhorony Lenina (The Funeral of Lenin). 1924. Filmstrip.

Prelude to War. Directed by Frank Kapra. 1942. Filmstrip.

Prigovor suda – prigovor naroda (Verdict of the court – verdict of the people). Directed by Ilia Kopalin. su1938. Filmstrip.

Raboche-krestianskaia (Worker-Peasant). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii. 1936. Filmstrip.

Razgrom Iaponii (Defeat of Japan). Directed by Aleksandr Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits. 1945. Filmstrip.

Razgrom nemetskikh voisk pod Moskvoi (The Defeat of German-Fascist Troops near Moscow). Directed by Leonid Varlamov and Il'ia Kopalin. 1942. Filmstrip.

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Sedovtsy. Directed by Roman Karmen and Mikhail Slutskii. 1940. Filmstrip.

Der Sieg des Glaubens (The Victory of Faith). Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1933. Filmstrip.

Slava geroiam Khasana (Glory to the Heroes of Khasan). Directed by Il'ia Kopalin. 1938. Filmstrip.

Snezhnyi Marsh (Snowy March). Directed by P. Pallei. 1934. Filmstrip.

Stalingrad. Directed by Leonid Varlamov. 1943. Filmstrip.

Stalinskoe plemia (The Stalin Tribe). Directed by V. Erofeev, Ia. Posel'skii, and Irina Setkina. 1937. Filmstrip.

Sud idet (The Court Is in Session). Directed by Il'ia Kopalin. 1943. Filmstrip.

Syny trudovogo naroda (Sons of a People of Labor). Directed by Rafail Gikov, Il'ia Kopalin, and Mikhail Slutskii. 1937. Filmstrip.

Tag der Freiheit: Unsere Wehrmacht (Day of Freedom: Our Armed Forces). Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1935. Filmstrip

Tragediia v Katynskom lesu (Tragedy in the Katyn' Forest). Directed by Ia. Posel'skii. 1944. Filmstrip.

Tri pesni o Lenine (Three Songs of Lenin). Directed by Dziga Vertov. 1934. Filmstrip.

Triumph des Willens (Triumph of the Will). Directed by Leni Riefenstahl. 1934. Filmstrip.

Tsvetushchaia ordenonosnaia (Flowering Medal Bearer). Directed by Il'ia Kopalin. 1938. Filmstrip.

Tsyrk (Circus). Directed by Grigorii Aleksandrov and Isidor Simkov. 1936. Filmstrip.

Udarom na udar (Blow after Blow). Directed by Ia. Posel'skii. 1936. Filmstrip.

Varshava (Warsaw). 1944. Filmstrip.

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Desert Victory. Directed by Roy Boulting. 1943. Filmstrip.

Vladimir Maiakovskii. Directed by S. Bubrik. 1940. Filmstrip.

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War Comes to America. Directed by Frank Capra. 1944. Filmstrip

Zhit' zazhitochno (To Live in Prosperity). Directed by Mikhail Slutskii. 1933. Filmstrip.

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