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Leaders of Soviet Film Distribution (1930–1991): Trends and Patterns

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Abstract

The author of the article analyzed 300 Soviet films, which gained the largest number of viewers in the first year of the demonstration in cinemas. It turned out that entertainment genres (comedy, detective, melodrama, etc.) dominate among them. The percentage of entertainment films is the highest in the top ten (90 %), but it also prevails in the first thirty (73.3 %) and in general among the most box office three hundred Soviet films (62.0 %). At the same time, the number of popular non-entertainment films among the 300 most box office films in the USSR, which used to be quite significant in the 1960s (33 films), decreased steadily thereafter, reaching a minimum in the 1980s (8 films).

The analysis also showed that only ten Soviet directors managed to make between four and nine films that were among the 300 most box office films in the USSR. Here too, the dominance of entertainment genres is evident (75 %). In fact, only all four of Sergei Gerasimov's most popular films were made outside the entertainment film industry.

Entertainment genres dominate the work of Soviet directors, whose list of the most popular films in the USSR includes two or three films.

A similar trend in the popularity of entertainment film can be seen in the lists of the most popular films of the Soviet Union's republics: (75 % of production falls within the entertainment sphere).

With regard to the gender aspect, it turned out that the list of the 300 most box office films of Soviet cinema of the 1930s–1980s included only 12 films (4 %) made by female directors, while the first 50 most box office films of the USSR made between the 1930s and 1980s included films made only by male directors.

At the same time, among the 12 most box office films produced by women directors, entertainment films (75 %) naturally dominate again.

It should be noted here that among the most popular Soviet television films, entertainment genres almost always dominate.

Thus, despite all the efforts made to introduce communist ideology and active state support for "ideologically mature" cinema, the general public generally followed the world's laws: entertainment films of entertainment genres (though in many cases of high professional quality) consistently came out on top of the audience preferences.

Keywords: film, movie, cinema, USSR, analysis, socio-culture context, film history, soviet directors.

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1. Introduction

Which Soviet directors could be considered the most popular directors during the 1930s – 1980s? Why did these Soviet films become the leaders of the box office? To what extent did films made not in the Soviet Russia, but in the Soviet Union republics (Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, etc.) become Soviet screen hits? What was the share of female directors among the directors of Soviet films? In this article, I have tried to answer these questions that are significant in terms of the history of cinema.

2. Materials and methods

In my previous studies (Fedorov, 2012, etc.), I have repeatedly turned to media text analysis based on the work of Umberto Eco, Art Silverblatt, and other scientists (Eco, 1998; 2005; Eco, 1976; Silverblatt, 2001: 80–81). This time I chose from the list of 300 most popular Soviet films of the 1930s – 1980s (Appendix 1) the films made by the leading directors and tried to analyze (in ideological and socio-cultural context) why these films became hits of Soviet distribution.

In my opinion, the analysis of film texts data is especially important for media literacy educational tasks in the education of future historians, culturologists, media critics, sociologists, philologists, psychologists, and teachers.

3. Discussion

I will start with the list of 30 most popular Soviet films in the history of the USSR (Table 1).

Table 1. 30 most popular Soviet films *

1. 87.6. *Pirates of the XX Century* (1979) by Boris Durov
2. 84.4. *Moscow does not believe in tears* (1979) by Vladimir Menshov
3. 76.7. *Diamond Hand* (1969) by Leonid Gaidai
4. 76.5. *Caucasian Captive* (1967) by Leonid Gaidai
5. 74.6. *Wedding in Malinovka* (1967) by Andrei Tutyshkin
6. 71.1. *Crew* (1980) by Alexander Mitta
7. 69.6. *Operation "Y" and Shurik's other adventures* (1965) by Leonid Gaidai
8. 68.3. *Shield and Sword* (1968) by Vladimir Basov
9. 66.2. *The New Adventures of the Elusive* (1969) by Edmond Keosayan
10. 66.0. *And the dawns here are quiet...* (1971) by Stanislav Rostotsky
11. 65.5. *Amphibian Man* (1961) by Vladimir Chebotarev & Gennady Kazansky
12. 65.0. *Gentlemen of Good Luck* (1972) by Alexander Sery
13. 64.9. *Tabor goes up in the sky* (1976) by Emil Lotyanu
14. 62.5. *Kalina Red* (1974), by Vasily Shukshin
15. 62.2. *Afonja* (1975) by Georgy Danelia
16. 60.8. *Crown of the Russian Empire* (1973) by Edmond Keosayan
17. 60.7. *Ivan Vasilyevich changes his profession* (1973) by Leonid Gaidai
18. 59.4. *Stepmother* (1973) by Oleg Bondarev
19. 58.4. *Office Romance* (1978) by Eldar Ryazanov
20. 58.0. *War and Peace* (1966) by Sergei Bondarchuk
21. 57.8. *Fate* (1978) by Evgeny Matveev
22. 56.2. *Russian Field* (1972) by Nikolai Moskalenko
23. 56.0. *Liberation* (1970) by Yuri Ozerov
24. 55.2. *Strong in Spirit* (1968) by Victor Georgiev
25. 55.2. *Sportloto–82* (1982) by Leonid Gaidai
26. 54.9. *Woman who Sings* (1979) by Alexander Orlov
27. 54.9. *Little Vera* (1988) by Vasily Pichul
28. 54.5. *Elusive Avengers* (1967) by Edmond Keosayan
29. 54.1. *Tavern on Pyatnitskaya* (1978) by Alexander Fynzimmer
30. 53.4. *Officers* (1971) by Vladimir Rogovoy

* Sequence of data in the Table 1: place in the rating, number of millions of viewers for the first year of the distribution, film title, year, director(s).

The most popular Soviet film has forever remained an action film by Boris Durov *Pirates of the XX Century* (1979): 87.6 million viewers (many of whom, especially teenagers, watched this tape several times) for the first year of the distribution.

Soviet film critics met *Pirates of the XX century* in general negative, recognizing, of course, their unheard of box office success.

Vladimir Ishimov in the *Cinema Art* first noted the reasons for the success of the film: "*If we talk about adventure, it really turned out to be a picture with a professionally built dashing plot, abounding in acute situations and sudden storyline whirlwinds ... And when the sadist Saleh ... gave a beautiful girl to quite animal-like maniac Haadi with the words: "You were a Pai-girl, right? We're going to check it out now," the cinema hall was freezing: will they show? Isn't it a spectacle? There's no doubt about it. Adventure? Of course*" (Ishimov, 1981: 73–74).

Then a film critic rebuked *Pirates...* for what he thought was an outdated plot stereotype: "*Everything in it is according to the old-fashioned canon, everything is the fruit not of free creative fiction, but of careful study of similar patterns*" (Ishimov, 1981: 76).

And finally, the main ethical reproach to the creators of *Pirates of the XX Century* followed at the end of the article: "*Our sailors, like pirates, kill easily, as if they were playing a joke, without any emotions or reflexions. It's as if all their previous lives they've done is kill. ... And the murders are so spectacular and so beautiful again, one can't help but ask himself: "Is it moral to present such a thrill to young viewers who are mesmerized in the screen?"*" (Ishimov, 1981: 80–81). Today, when hundreds of Hong Kong and Hollywood action films (including pirate and maritime topics) distributed in Russia, *Pirates of the XX Century*, of course, do not strike the imagination of Russian audience...

But I must admit that it was one of the first Russian films, made by proven Western recipes. The "arithmetic mean" components of the action movie are quite clearly calculated here: fights, shootings, chases, beauties, disturbing music, characters beating through the edge of experience, minimum dialogues, maximum physical action and other attributes of the genre.

In the *Pirates...* quite skillfully used the most winning elements of the spectacular genres. The action is built on a fairly rapid change of short (so as not to bore the audience) episodes. Plus sensational informative: the mosaic of events unfolds in exotic places, the screen shows the cruel world of Evil (drug dealers, professional killers, gangsters, etc.), which opposes the main character – almost magical, fairytale character. He is beautiful, strong, charming, out of all supernatural situations comes out intact. In addition, many episodes actively affect human emotions and instincts (sense of fear, for example).

Second place among Soviet films in box office receipts is occupied by Vladimir Menshov's melodrama *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979). 84.4 million viewers saw this film in the first year of its screening in cinemas. And soon, contrary to the predictions of detractors, this picture won the Oscar in America as the best foreign film of the year.

S. Kudryavtsev, in my opinion, quite reasonably believes that the main reason for the "Oscar" success of *Moscow...* was the fact that "*Americans have learned their – and quite relevant – the story of a self-made woman who stubbornly and purposefully strives to achieve their dreams*" (Kudryavtsev, 2007).

However, the *Cinema Art* did publish a positive review of *Moscow...*, emphasizing that "*moral lesson, which carries the picture "Moscow does not believe in tears", far from boring didacticism or straightforward edification, the film develops fascinatingly, melting a lot of unexpected, paradoxical situations and turns*" (Bauman, 1980: 44).

Therefore, film critic Elena Bauman (1932–2017) noted that in *Moscow...* "*the colourfulness of the preceding details here is often replaced by indecipherable mottling, their choice loses its accuracy, and then it begins to seem that the taste sometimes changes the authors, and the screen becomes sweaty, fortunately not for long*" (Bauman, 1980: 47).

At the same time, the final positive verdict of E. Bauman was adjusted to the requirements of the Communist Party & Social Realism: "*Whatever private miscalculations of the picture, it – to emphasize it again and with all certainty – has won a convincing victory in the main thing: in the mapping of the processes of life in our society, in creating the image of the modern hero. ... Behind the images of heroes we see typical layers of our society, we see today's working class, the rich spiritual world of the Soviet man, his best qualities – integrity, honesty, and depth of feeling*" (Bauman, 1980: 47).

Russian film critic Yevgeny Nefedov believes that "*the story about the search for eternal female happiness by three friends, gets a very, say, specific sound in specific historical and social*

conditions. *Menshov and screenwriter Valentin Chernykh have come to recreate the atmosphere of the recent past (only twenty years have passed, and it seems – a whole eternity!) with a fair share of irony, with elements, in essence, of postmodernist aesthetics"* (Nefedov, 2014).

Well, one way or another, but *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* still remains one of the most popular and beloved films by Russian viewers today.

Leonid Gaidai became a record-breaker in the number of films that made it to the 300 most box office films of the USSR era.

Today Leonid Gaidai's parody comedy *Diamond Hand* (1969) is an undeniable classic of Russian cinema. However, after the triumphant release of this film (76.7 million viewers in the first year of the distribution and the final third place in the list of the most box office Soviet films) "*critics began to attack the director, reproaching the master in the absence of deep social problems"* (Volkov, Miloserdova, 2010: 111).

Here is a typical example of this kind of criticism from the standpoint of "socialist realism": "*there is little point in this unrestrainedly funny film. On the other hand, there are tricks. There are many, many old tricks designed for viewers of not very high intellectual level. Who's the movie about? The smugglers? But they look so miserable and primitive in comedy that they can be ignored. About domestic incinerators and women of life? But it's like they got off the cartoons from fifteen years ago. The film is about the extraordinary adventures of a humble accountant... If the positive characters of the film were opposed by expressive negative characters, if their collision drew our attention to some moral conflicts of time, if we saw in the comedy of the modern villain, in some new, previously unnoticed appearance. "Diamond Hand" not only did not discover anything new, she and our previous shortcomings so kindly depicted"* (Young Communard, 1969).

However, not all critics of those times treated the *Diamond Hand* so negatively. Delighted review of this film wrote, for example, D. Pisarevsky, claiming that *Diamond Hand* has "*nice experiment of the genres' synthesis. The colorful and wide-screen movie ... turned out to be sharp and entertaining, funny and ironic. ... the film is staged funny, mischievous, at a rapid pace. It literally stuns a cascade of plot surprises, comedy tricks, witty lines"* (Pisarevsky, 1970: 58).

Already in post-Soviet times, S. Kudryavtsev reasonably noted that Leonid Gaidai himself had a "diamond hand" – and he, like the king Midas, turned almost everything he touched into gold. In America, he would have been a multimillionaire like Stephen Spielberg during his lifetime – thanks to his comedies, which brought the Soviet cinema a fortune. The audience in Soviet cinemas on Gaidai's films was about 600 million people" (Kudravtsev, 2006).

In addition, S. Kudravtsev, followed by D. Howard (Howard, 2016), made it clear that the parody of *Diamond Hand* is heavily influenced by the stereotypes of James Bond movies...

E. Nefedov, in my opinion, with reason argues that the *Diamond Hand* helped a multimillion audience, laughing until it fell, to get rid of "*the legacy of the past, of countless complexes, in what sometimes were ashamed to admit even to themselves. Be it the latent craving for forbidden eroticism ..., fears an songs, easily read in an allegorical key"* (Nefedov, 2006).

It is well known that *Diamond Hand*, which is fantastically popular in the USSR and in present-day Russia, turned out to be a "tough nut" for foreigners. This is exactly what D. Gorelov notes: "*It has long been noticed that Gaidai can only please his compatriot. Come and explain to someone else what is "you'd better come to us" or "you lived on one salary". The phrase "Russo touristo – oblico morale" can not only be explained, but also clearly translated. The very story of a hard layman who firmly endured the temptation of the yellow devil, coca-cola and nacreous buttons, bent, but not broken by the green snake, was absolutely international ... Phenomenatically scrutinized, sensitive to the mass phobias of developed mankind Gaidai considered it possible to adapt the plot "on a fairy tale visit" to the hermetic Soviet society"* (Gorelov, 2018).

As a result, having entered the Soviet and Russian life with his winged phrases, as a truly ironic encyclopedia of Soviet life, *Diamond Hand* forever remained in the "golden collection" of Soviet/Russian cinema...

Comedy *Caucasian Captive* (1967) by Leonid Gaidai was also a phenomenal success: this comedy was watched by 76.5 million viewers in its first distribution year (fourth most popular among all Soviet films), hundreds of millions of people watched it in the following decades...

This eccentric comedy was very warmly welcomed by Soviet film critics. For example, Mikhail Kuznetsov (1914–1980) praised it in the most popular film magazine – *Soviet screen* (Kuznetsov, 1967).

Approval review was awarded to the *Caucasian Captive* and a theoretical magazine *Cinema Art*, although the film critic Mark Zak (1929–2011) added a drop of tar: "*The film was lucky – and fair – in the audience and critics. Other reviews were like toasts, exclamation points, collided like glasses... A sense of humor should protect the authors from excessive praise*" (Zak, 1967: 85).

Today, "*by the number of phrases that have become winged, the "Caucasian Captive" can only compete with "Diamond Hand". ... They became part of our everyday life, and meanwhile the authors of the script had to fight for them, for the characters, and for many plot collisions*" (Mikhailova, 2012).

Think for yourself: on a plot of *Caucasian Captive* the head of Soviet region, member of the Communist Party comrade Saahov (brilliant role of Vladimir Etush!) not only steals the young nice girl, but also forcibly sends to "mental asylum" of the "dissident" student! Imagine for a moment that the same plot falls into the hands of Hollywood propagandists era of "cold war" and decided in the genre of denunciation drama!

But Gaidai didn't shoot his film in Hollywood, and "*the trials of a conscientious, smart and responsive young intellectual are really funny, built, of course, on sparkling gags and situations close to anecdotal absurdity*" (Nefedov, 2006).

One can agree that "*the stereotype of Gaidai's films as a set of primarily eccentric tricks and tricks designed for the "healthy laughter" of not very demanding audiences has not yet been fully overcome. But this is not the case. In Gaidai's comedies, which corresponded to the people's understanding of humor, the viewer also caught a more serious, bitter–ironic meaning*" (Volkov, Miloserdova, 2010: 111).

The attentive viewer saw that in the *Caucasian Captive* carnival festive ridicule exposed features of the system that are (supposedly) going back in time; the protagonist in various forms bears a childish eccentric origin (Margolit, 2012: 446).

At the same time, now, in uncensored times, we can say that Leonid Gaidai's game was often played on the verge of foul: in the *Caucasian Captive* – the young girl "*was dancing a bourgeois twist alien to Soviet culture, running around in tights and a man's shirt – the top of provocative eroticism! ... And Gaidai's similar liberties got away with it. In "Diamond Hand" there was a striptease scene, the beauty of which, by the way, is not in the nude, but in the line "It's not my fault!", borrowed from "Resurrection" of Leo Tolstoy. Thus, the director expanded the audience capable of enjoying his humor – unprepared viewer did not notice postmodernism, and picky intellectuals could enjoy an individual approach. Many colleagues considered Gaidai a master of "commercial" and folk art, not "high" art. And his sense of comic every time turned out to be much more complicated than one might think*" (Moskvitin, 2013).

"Operation "Y" (1965) – also one of the most box office films of Leonid Gaidai: in the first distribution year, this film gathered 70 million audience (seventh place in box office in the USSR).

The Soviet film critics also met "Operation "Y" with great enthusiasm, as finally "comedy as if shaken off the fatigue acquired during the years of hard sitting in a society of disinterested people, straightened out the faded members, wanted to check – is it not older, has not lost strength. It turned out that she hadn't gotten old, hadn't lost her strength. She can shake old and demonstrate a cascade of dizzying tricks, but at the same time perfectly orientated in modern interiors" (Khlop'yankina, 1966: 100).

In post–Soviet times, Leonid Gaidai's work was already interpreted culturally. A. Prokhorov reasonably argued that "*Gaidai offered the viewer fundamentally new comic masks, which, unlike fairytale characters, reflected in their grotesque form modern popular culture, the life of a Soviet street*" (Prokhorov, 2012: 233), "*and here he got to the very point – his film was thus a collective antidepressant without any side effects*" (Dobrotvorsky, 1996).

Leonid Gaidai's work is universal, his best films are still admired today by audiences and film critics alike. S. Dobrotvorsky once compared Gaidai with Alfred Hitchcock. The comparison is bold, but, in my opinion, true – both these great cinematographers, in fact, treated cinema "*not as a piece of life, but as a piece of cake. Only such, quite cynical attitude can give rise to an inescapable "sweetness" of cinema, increased gaming tone and technical makeup of the image as unconditional and reliable*" (Dobrotvorsky, 1996).

Ivan Vasilyevich changes his profession (1973) – freestyle screening Bulgakov's satirical comedy in the enchanting direction of Leonid Gaidai in the first year of the distribution attracted 60.7 million viewers (17th place by attendance among all Soviet films) and immediately caused heated debate among film critics.

In the Soviet official paper *Pravda*, the film was modestly praised, but they also noted that L. Gaidai "sometimes has the bad taste. For example, a woman takes off her wig and it turns out... bald. Is that funny? It could be. But it's kind of unattractive" (Kozhukhova, 1973: 4).

But in general, film critics were united in their positive assessment of the film (Bogomolov, 1973: 7–8; Klado, 1973: 4; Rybak, 1973: 20; Zorky, 1974: 78–79). The film critic M. Kuznetsov (1914–1980), for example, noted that comedy is not only funny, it is still smart, and spicy (Kuznetsov, 1973: 2).

E. Gromov (1931–2005) stressed that Leonid Gaidai "caustically ridiculed swagger and bureaucracy, impudence and vanity, selfishness and stupidity" (Gromov, 1973: 8).

The well-known film critic Victor Demin (1937–1993) was also very favourable to this comedy: "Today our film comedy cannot boast a lot of luck... On this disturbing background L. Gaidai's comedy joke is unconditional and remarkable luck" (Demin, 1975: 81). "A fantastic machine, which was invented by our old friend Shurik (A. Demyanenko), of course, is not a time machine. It, a parody machine, the comparison of times, their grass transmission through each other, has only one purpose – to learn in a familiar stranger, in the usual – nonsense" (Demin, 1973: 13).

Of course, in those years, Soviet film critics in their articles could not marry the "red flags" of censorship and wrote about the satirical hints of the film by L. Gaidai very carefully.

It was only in the 21st century that E. Nefedov drew the reader's attention to the fact that "Ivan Vasilyevich changes his profession" – "the film, which serves as a true encyclopedia of Soviet life in the period of the beginning of the so-called 'stagnation', a treasure trove of winged phrases and characteristic situations, itself became an integral part of the cultural context. ... The director also has time to gloat over the research of other artists who built global concepts on historical material, such as Eisenstein, whose ingenious creation about "Ivan the Terrible" ... is gracefully parodied" (Nefedov, 2006).

It is curious that "in the USA this comedy is known mainly under the headings "Ivan Vasilyevich: Back to the Future" and "Ivan the Terrible: Back to the Future". And retrospectively, the film is indeed perceived as the forerunner of Zemeckis' extravaganza... And it can be said with a clear conscience that Soviet filmmakers have managed to shut up their Western colleagues by the belt with their "unscientific-fiction, not quite realistic and not strictly historical film" (as it is said in the credits) – playful and easy! (Nefedov, 2006).

Another comedy by Leonid Gaidai – *Sportloto-82* (1982) in the first distribution year watched 55.2 million viewers.

Soviet film critics, previously, with great enthusiasm supported the best works of Leonid Gaidai (*Operation "Y"*, *Caucasian Captive*, *Diamond Hand*), met the comedy *Sportloto-82* very sour, reproaching her for the secondary: "Of course, you feel some joy – from the very process of recognizing what you see. But what I laughed at in other films, it does not seem funny anymore ... But here, just a little familiar – the plot, characters, tricks. Maybe that's what Gaidai intended – to make a mockery about his own comedies?" (Kryuchkov, 1982).

Curiously, many today's viewers also agree with this opinion of the film critics (here, too, the comments published on the cinema-theatre.ru portal):

– "The film is significant for Gaidai. Of course, it is already "extinct" here. His zenith of creativity remained in the 1960s and 1970s. ... All the heroes and tricks from early Gaidai. But the young man here is boring and squeezed. ... Racing on a motorcycle is weaker than racing in the "Caucasian Captive". And the whole film is no longer laughing, as in "Operation "Y", for example" (Anonym).

– "Perhaps one of the few films of Gaidai, which I frankly did not like. It didn't seem to me. I don't want to offend the fans of this film" (Inna).

There are, of course, softer reviews from the audience:

– "Fading Gaidai. Of course, despite the strong cast, this film is inferior to the masterpieces of young Gaidai. But, after 25 years, the film looks different. You don't notice imperfections and playful episodes, you take pity on nature and naive actions of heroes of long gone time" (Alla).

However, even today, this movie has a lot of fans:

– "Gaidai is a talent. ... Now there are no such and will not be anymore. Thousands of viewers rode their films with laughter. And funny, funny, and relaxing. And it's nice to watch. What about "Sportslotto 82"? Well, that's beautiful. Who doesn't like it, don't watch it. Do not spoil the mood of other connoisseurs of the best of the best" (Alexei).

– *"Sportloto–82" is for me the most delicate Gaidai comedy. Summer, soft, no evil satirical kicks, no explosions of laughter, but with a charm*" (D. Jump).

Interestingly, the movie *Wedding in Malinovka* (1967) became a real hit of distribution, overtaking even *"Operation "Y"* and *"Amphibian Man"*: 74.6 million viewers in the first distribution year and fifth place in popularity among all Soviet films.

It is not so easy to understand the reason for this super–popularity. In Soviet times, it was accepted to be explained by light comedy genre, fun music and bright acting.

In the post–Soviet period, Western film studies put forward a version of the success of "colonial–style cinematography," which allowed Russian viewers to laugh at Ukrainian people, so, they say, and phrases in Ukrainian in *Wedding in Malinovka* were pronounced by negative characters (Pressitch, 2013: 83–91). It should be noted here that there is practically no real Ukrainian language in this film: it is the so–called South Russian dialect...

The Russian film critic D. Gorelov as the main reason of success of *Weddings in Malinovka* emphasized a kind of following of the authors of the film Gogol's fairy tales precepts (Gorelov, 2018). I agree with D. Gorelov that, despite many boring and instructive, ideologically mature Soviet dramas about the Civil War, B. Aleksandrov's operetta, which formed the basis of the scenario *Wedding in Malinovka*, gave operational space for the folklore show (Gorelov, 2018).

Yes, the civil war in *Wedding in Malinovka*, in fact, was turned into a fervent banter full of folkloric comedy and melodramatic motifs. But Soviet censorship was very selective and sometimes unpredictable. Solved in the grotesque comedy genre *Intervention* (1967) was sent to the shelf, and "ideologically correct" folk operetta *Wedding in Malinovka* started marching triumphantly on the screens of Soviet urban and rural cinemas.

Sixth place in the list of the most box office Soviet films was taken by *Crew* (1980) by Alexander Mitta, who successfully synthesized the genres of melodrama and film crash. In the first distribution year, this film was seen by 71 million viewers.

In those days, film critic Andrei Plakhov, reflecting on the reasons for the success of this spectacular film, wrote that *Crew* – is *"heroic adventure film. It openly opposes those Western pictures, where the total fear, the disunity of people at the time of disasters, asserted the weakness and lowness of human nature. But he also argues with the model of the superhuman hero, with the vulgar neo–romanticism of the James Bond's type"* (Plakhov, 1980: 75).

Having recognized this kind of merits of the film, Plakhov immediately chewed it, relying on the high moral and ideological norms of Soviet society: *"The fascination of action sometimes still borders on selfish entertainment. The scale of the shooting – with calculated gigantomania. ... no, no, the taste of the vulgar "strawberry" is slipping. ... As experience has shown, neither genre–thematic features nor emphasis on spectacle do not in themselves ensure high ideological quality and genuine artisticity"* (Plakhov, 1980: 79).

But most likely, it was precisely what in 1980 caused the condemnation of A. Plahov, in fact, was an additional attraction for the mass success of the film, to such an extent that it retained its popularity among the audience that 35 years later director Nikolai Lebedev decided to make his remake.

Film critic Elena Stishova met the new *Crew* (2016) very positively: *"Nikolai Lebedev, who since childhood dreamed of retelling his favorite movie "Crew", reacted sensitively to changes in society. As a result, we received a super–technological product, shot at the highest level of modern visual sorcery. ... I am writing about the new work of Nikolai Lebedev, respecting his upward professionalism and rare romanticism to this day. I see the director's attempts to balance the powerful spectator potential of the thriller, that is, the super picture, human history. I especially appreciate the director's message that heroism and self–sacrifice are not valued today in a society that is locked in profits and income"* (Stishova, 2016).

However, not all Russian film critics agreed with this assessment. For example, Nina Tsyrukun was convinced that *"apart from the spectacular attraction of the second part, Mitta bribed with an overture of vitality and, at the same time, the non–triviality of the personal problems of his characters. Lebedev is guided by the pattern of today's Hollywood catastrophic action. Therefore, his personal stories are minimized and predictable in principle. Let it be so, but the problem is that it has nothing to do with the canon anymore: with the clumsiness and unreliability of the corresponding scenes, which it would be better not to have at all"* (Tsyrukun, 2016).

Anyway, Russian viewers of the XXI century met the new "Crew" is not bad: it has become one of the most box office films of the post–Soviet period.

Vladimir Basov's controversial film *Shield and Sword* (1968) was viewed by 68.3 million viewers in its first distribution year (eighth place in the list of the most box office films of the USSR).

The authors of the film from the first shots of the film made it clear that they do not pretend to document the accuracy of the narrative, and immersed the audience in the element of adventure of the Soviet scout in the enemy rear.

In this regard, the magazine *Cinema Art* reproached that "*many events – as they look in the film – come into conflict with historical reality, with the principles and originality of intelligence*" (Gubernatorov, 1968: 12).

Victor Revich noted that "*it is not uncommon for authors to put their heroes in situations that are obviously improbable. It is badly believed that in wartime Germany a Soviet plane could have easily landed and taken off, that clandestine groups were operating there, capturing prisons and trains in broad daylight, that a thoroughly legalized Soviet intelligence officer took an open part in these raids, that in those places it was possible to "spread" among the population a whole echelon of children taken out of concentration camps*" (Revich, 1969: 141).

Russian film critics of the XXI century referred to the *Shield and Sword* much softer. Irina Grashchenkova, for example, to the merits of the film reasonably attributed the fact that the actors in it "did not look like" ruffled Germans and, perhaps, for the first time in a few years before the famous *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, played a clever, strong opponent (Grashchenkova, 2010: 61). A similar positive evaluation of the *Shield and Sword* was characteristic of A. Muradov (Muradov, 2017: 400–417) and A. Muradyan (Muradyan, 2018).

However, the majority of Russian viewers today do not care as much as the *Shield and Sword* shows the events of the war years. The spectators are attracted by the bright talent of young at that time Stanislav Lyubshin and Oleg Yankovsky, Alla Demidova and Valentina Titova. And someone continues to sing their favorite melody, written for the film by Veniamin Basner...

In fairness, it should be noted that if the detective series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973) would have been filmed for cinemas and stacked on the meter in the same 4 series as the *Shield and Sword*, the *Seventeen Moments...* would undoubtedly be among the most box office Soviet films.

Film critic Victor Demin was right: the reason of the extraordinary popularity of *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, "*was the drama of the revealed secrets. The most hidden floor of the Nazi state machine, the wheels and screws of the Reich's behind-the-scenes mechanism, the secrets of the imperial office, the underground bunkers of the Gestapo – everything suddenly opened up before our eyes. ...What is it? There are people there. Disappeared by the Nazi order. Used to trust "the system" more than themselves. But still people, not monsters*" (Demin, 1973).

Of course, V. Demin saw the shortcomings of this film, drawing the attention of readers to the fact that "*it's a shame that the detective rules of the game cripple this serious layer of role, and the same Isaev in other episodes looks in the plot of the most naive yellow novice, then forgetting about the fingerprints, then playing the above-mentioned masquerade with an overhead mustache*" (Demin, 1973).

Of course, the Soviet film critics of those years could not afford to write about the fact that the Nazi system shown in *Moments...* could have been interpreted by a perceptive part of the audience as a metaphor for the Soviet Communist party and bureaucratic machine, but this attraction, of course, also should not be discounted for the reasons for the popularity of the film...

Eastern *Elusive Avengers* (1967) in the first distribution year saw 54.5 million viewers (twenty-eighth place in the list of the most box office films of the USSR). The sequel to this story titled *New Adventures of the Elusive* (1969) saw 12 million more viewers in its first distribution year (66.2 million and ninth place in the list of the most box office films of the USSR).

Both films were once quite positively received by the Soviet film critics. However, commending the *Elusive Avengers* for the fact that "*from the first seconds of the young heroes in the action, tense, resilient*" (Shcherbakov, 1967: 59), Konstantin Shcherbakov drew the attention of readers that "*tightening the action, stopping the lively rhythm of the film occur somewhere in the middle of the action. The tempo is slowed down, the happily found combination of irony and gravity, game and reality is lost. There are scenes heavy, boring*" (Shcherbakov, 1967: 60).

In the post-Soviet period, Y. Filimonov, in my opinion, quite reasonably argued that "*not by historical reliability, but by the romantic elevation of the legend and at the same time by the reckless joking joke attracted the first part of the trilogy. ... the appearance of the "Elusive Avengers" was clear evidence that the events of the revolution and the civil war were losing the*

content of a living historical document, and ... turned into folklore like a epic" (Filimonov, 2010: 225).

The same Y. Filimonov – already in relation to the film *New Adventures of the Elusive* – wrote as follows: "It is no longer teenagers, but young people ... begin to act not spontaneously improvised, not on their own initiative, and received the task. They are not demiurges of their own legend, but functionaries" (Filimonov, 2010: 225).

At the same time, none of the film critics – neither in the 1960s nor later – paid any attention to the fact that the underage heroic personage of the *Elusive Avengers* were turned, by the will of their dashing authors, into ruthless functionaries of the sharp story genre, ready to destroy even their peers. What is the scene when red children kill a young boy from the enemy side... In terms of unconditional justification of the so-called "revolutionary violence", the authors of *Elusive Avengers* were in step with the children's and youth "historic-revolutionary" cinema era of the 1920s – 1930s, where "right-communist" children would kill their enemies right and left...

A parody film *Crown of the Russian Empire, or Elusive Again* (1973) in the first distribution year receive 60.8 million viewers (sixteenth place in the list of the most box office films of the USSR).

Meanwhile, critics of this seemingly obvious parody for some reason not felt.

For example, worried by the spoiled authors of the *Crown...* positive images of young Reds, a famous Soviet film critic Y. Bogomolov wrote: "The authors can embrace children as much as they want, but they are not children themselves. They themselves know as well as their critics what is stupid in their picture. And the way the crown is missing is stupid. And the way it was sought is ridiculous. And the way Ksanka ran a train on a handcar... And the way the staff captain blew up the fuel tank over her ear, and she didn't even drive. ... Besides, the youngest and most gullible viewer will really take the film as a romantic story about the brave Chekists. The more obvious is the moral damage that this picture can cause" (Bogomolov, 1972: 4).

L. Likhodeev also reasoned in about the same spirit: "For example, the bulls are everywhere. And the fact that he – the bulls, only emphasizes the failure of the picture. The same can be said about other glorious artists invited to the film" (Likhodeev, 1972: 27).

It is interesting that today of the entire trilogy about the "Elusive" it is the *Crown of the Russian Empire*, in my opinion, looks better than the other two parts: here the authors have finally turned their history from the semblance of a "revolutionary romantic" western into a bumpy parody spectacle, not at all trying to somehow get caught up in the likelihood.

The war drama of *And the dawns here are quiet...* (1972) in the first distribution year received 66 million viewers (tenth place among all movies in the USSR).

Screening the famous novel by Boris Vasilyev *And the dawns here are quiet...* Stanislav Rostotsky decided to play on the contrast of black and white military everyday life of a small squad of military girls, who came into battle with the Nazis, and colorful memories of girls about their pre-war past. The traditional theme of folk heroism was organically combined in the film with the theme of the unnaturalness of war, which ended in the death of the heroines who had just started to live.

The director managed to create a well-coordinated acting ensemble, consisting mainly of debutantes, and to reveal in some detail the characters of the main characters. Especially bright and dramatic was the scene of the death of the main heroine, in the last minutes of her life singing the verses of an ancient romance...

Against the backdrop of countless action movies about all-victorious military scouts paratroopers and large-scale military movie epics such as *Liberation* film *And the dawns here are quiet...* seemed in the early 1970's almost a standard of truthful reflection of the events of war days. But at the same time, was on the "shelf" Alexei German film *Check on the Roads*, which showed the war more rigidly...

Film critics in the 1970s met *And the dawns here are quiet...* very warm, emphasizing the drama and emotional impact of his best scenes. But Lev Anninsky (1934–2019), in my opinion, rightly noted the poster of color episodes of the film: "I'm closer to another: black and white, lead through the forest of the forty-second year, and the cry of Vaskov, who alone circled the forest, shooting and hiding, leading the Nazis behind him" (Anninsky, 1973: 33).

Vadim Sokolov came to similar conclusions. Highly appreciating the humanism and truth of the film's characters, he believed that he was "harmed by the straightforward, frankly edifying framework that connects this wartime story with the tourism of today's youth" (Sokolov, 1972: 4).

In 2015, a rather tactful remake of the film was done by director Renat Davletyarov, but, of course, to gather a multimillion audience new *And the dawns here are quiet...* could not ...

Fantastic *Amphibian Man* (1961), made by directors G. Kazansky (1910–1983) and V. Chebotaryov (1921–2010) was a huge success with the audience: 65.5 million viewers (eleventh place among all USSR films).

Contrary to the success of the film with millions of viewers, Soviet film critics met *Amphibian Man* hostile.

For example, film critic Andrei Zorky (1935–2006) wrote: "*Instead of the living elements of the ocean, the lord and captive of which was Ichthyander – a kind of unthinkable beauty of the sea, where floating Ichthyander and Guttiere, dressed in spectacular costumes, reminiscent of silver wrappers from chocolates. Well, and the actors' play is in harmony with this motley spectacle. It is impossible without irony to look at M. Kozakov (Pedro Zurita) playing something extremely negative and extremely nonexistent on earth, at V. Davydov (Olsen), who has to embody the mysterious image of a persecuted journalist*" (Zorky, 1962).

Another famous media critic of those years, Stanislav Rassadin (1935–2012), was in complete agreement with Andrei Zorky, assuring that even a feuilleton could have been written about the *Amphibian Man* – there are too many elementary overlays and the most uncomplicated banalities. ... Underwater shooting is really impeccable, ... but the falsity of the whole figurative system of the film, its lightweight beauty set up for a frivolous perception of everything that is done on the screen, – even something to watch, something to admire. Still, even the most remarkable technical innovations are not enough to create a work of art" (Rassadin, 1962: 7).

Another famous Soviet literary and film critic Boris Galanov (1914–2000) was convinced that "*the success of the quite craft film "Amphibian Man", a film in which there is neither real beauty nor good taste, but there is a lot of beauty and tastelessness, causes not only sadness and annoyance. This success makes us think about the fate of the genre*" (Galanov, 1962: 8).

The verdict of Victor Revich (1929–1997) was no less sharp: "*What is the novel by A. Belyaev about? About the tragedy of Ichthyander, about the collapse of the illusions of a single scientist in a society of businessmen and traders. And what are the film's ideas? The political ones are reduced to depressing straightforwardness, the artistic ones to melodramatic love triangle and tasteless bungee walks of Ichthyander on roofs*" (Revich, 1968: 83).

Here it is – a typical in all its glory extra-genre approach of ideologized socialist film criticism, when exotic folklore and fairy-tale plot, mixed with bright melodramatic history, requires class-political conclusions!

As D. Gorelov correctly noted, the *Amphibian Man* became "the first super blockbuster of the post-Stalin era. Such a collapse of the cinema network has never seen ... It happened to a competent producer to see the ocean of gold that brought the film about amphibian ... But Chebotarev and Kazansky lived in a wild, ugly, ruthless world of "freedom, equality and brotherhood", where profit is nothing, and piece art is not to court. ... Criticism chose them for their lightness and attractiveness in the holy theme of the fight against capital..." (Gorelov, 2001).

Film historian and director Oleg Kovalov believes that "*the through inner theme of the art of the Soviet thaw ... was the study of the dramatic, if not tragic, fate of the idealist – the morally perfect man, who was pleased to appear in an imperfect and immoral world. The film "Amphibian Man", filmed in the genre of fantastic extravaganza, in its own way and most unexpectedly expressed this leading motive of Soviet art in the late 1950s – early 1960s.*" (Kovalov, 2014: 7–8).

One way or another, but the *Amphibian Man*, with his humanist concept and his time-consonant reflections on the country of the free (internally free, which the filmmakers could not directly tell us about), on the responsibility for human life and his destiny, became one of the symbols of the brief thaw era that has just begun. And, of course, the film *Amphibian Man* (1961) became one of the first swallows of the genre of "ecological fiction" of the Russian screen. In a very spectacular form here was stated the theme of responsibility of the scientist for his discoveries.

The comedy *Gentlemen of Fortune* (1971) only for the first distribution year received 65 million viewers (twelfth place among all movies of the USSR).

Today, this funny eccentric comedy, filmed in Gaidai's key, remains among the most favorite entertainment films of all Russian generations of viewers.

However, in the distribution year of *Gentlemen of Fortune* Soviet magazine *Cinema Art* published a scathing review of severe film critic Michael Bleiman (1904–1973). The article was simply devastating: the writers, the director, and almost all actors were scolded. The final verdict in

Mikhail Bleiman's review was as follows: *"I am not going to deny the director's right to stage a film using eccentric absurdity, emphasizing incredibly funny situations, comic behavior and even the funny appearance of actors. It's also a shame that the whole film is on the level of this sort of gags. ... the price of what is caused in "Gentlemen of Fortune" the response of the audience is small: indulgence of bad taste has not yet helped anyone to win the right to the respect of the audience and critics"* (Bleiman, 1972: 66, 71).

True, film critic Tatiana Khlopyankina (1937–1993) in his review, published in *Soviet Screen*, on the contrary, praised the actors and eventually decided that *Gentlemen of Fortune* is to us as a rare and welcome guest (Khlopyankina, 1972: 5).

Today, once again, reviewing the *Gentlemen of Fortune*, I can probably agree with E. Nefedov: this comedy became *"also a kind of panorama of Soviet life, acquainting with the specifics of life of people "from Moscow to the outskirts" ... In the neat strokes, bright little sketches (kindergarten, a game on clothing with an amateur chess player...), mocking aphoristic lines, instantly entered the folk vocabulary, it was possible to express much more than in other large-scale films, originally aimed at capturing the lacuna-free entourage of the era"* (Nefedov, 2006).

The romantic melodrama of Gypsy life *Tabor Goes into the Sky* (1976) in the first distribution year received 65 million viewers (thirteenth place among all Soviet films).

Curiously, this film was not a frequent example of how the box office champion is positively assessed as a viewer, there and film critics. In fact, this *"vivid, expressively told story on an eternal theme – the power of human passions – has earned the love of the audience and the favor of the cinematic public"* (Kuzmina, 2010: 273).

In the year of this release, film critic Alexander Lipkov (1936–2007) wrote in the *Cinema Art* magazine: *"Emil Lotyanu, whose former films cannot be imagined without festive brightness, without a romantic elevation of feelings, is here in his element. ... what in the films of another director might seem excessive, experienced, for Lotyanu is a natural necessity. ... I am happy to congratulate Emil Lotyanu on his success"* (Lipkov, 1976: 48–49, 54).

The reviewer of *Soviet Screen* Tatiana Ivanova also agreed with the opinion of A. Lipkov: *"How tense, how precisely calculated and fearlessly maintained the romantic concept ... This is a story about the rapid, fatal, doomed confrontation of two implacable proud hearts. It is a praise to freedom, which, like the sweetest wine, drinks the human soul"* (Ivanova, 1976: 2).

And today's viewers still love this most famous film poet Emil Lotyanu: *"A masterpiece of national cinema! One of my favorite movies. Svetlana Toma is gorgeous in the role of Rada, it is certainly her best role. The music is wonderful, all actors are very good"* (Xenia), *"The film, of course, chic"* (Letha), *"My God, how talented this film was filmed, such juicy colors, picturesque views of the Carpathians, as much as I look, and still do not get bored!"* (Serena).

Only in the first distribution year *Kalina Red* (1974) received 62.5 million viewers (fourteenth place among all films of the USSR). Perhaps only this famous film by Vasily Shukshin was equally highly appreciated by both film critics and mass audiences. At the same time, both in the 1970s and today.

Georgy Kapralov (1921–2010), a film critic, was right: *"In a different interpretation, the story of "Kalina Red" could have become both an ordinary criminal chronicle and a cheap melodrama. Shukshin elevates it to the height of moral–philosophical reflection on life, its true and false values"* (Kapralov, 1976: 76).

In *Kalina Red*, indeed, *"mixed up such seemingly heterogeneous qualities as pathos and the cruelty of the author's gaze, fine hearing and taste for an aphoristically bright word, for a joke, a mild grin and bad irony, sentimentality and anger – the anger of a fierce grin, fists shrinking"* (Levshina, 1975: 6).

Konstantin Rudnitsky (1920–1988) in his voluminous analytical review, published in the *Cinema Art* wrote that *"the blow that fate and the author are giving us in the finals... is painful and heavy. But he pushes all the content of the film to a new height of uncompromising reflection on the moral image of a man who is so easy to distort and misrepresent, and who is so unimaginably difficult to restore the former integrity and authenticity"* (Rudnitsky, 1974: 50–51).

In post–Soviet times, a well–known cultural anthropologist and film expert Neya Zorkaya drew attention to the fact that the structure of *Kalyna Red* *"is a path, that is, bipartite, when both meanings are simultaneously, inseparably and coherently realized at once: both literal and allegorical. In the story of the thief released from prison and murdered by his former comrades, another tragedy is read – the tragedy of escaping, in which the final questions of human*

existence are raised: about duty, faith and disbelief, about life and death. The language of the painting is full of Christian symbols, even though the author of this symbolism did not specifically think: fish (the symbol of Christ), white birds and black ... It is no longer Aesopian language, but rather a system of forced and possibly voluntary silences. And now, without the help of Aesop, we can say that before us is a work of religious art, ascending in its distant origin to the gospel story of the prudent robber" (Zorkaya, 1998).

And how often, alas, it happens in life only afterwards, "when Shukshin died, everybody understood that the death of Yegor Prokudin at the end of the film was in a kind of prophetic – Vasily Makarovich did not like the death of the main character in the frame, he considered it too much pressure on the viewer, but he could not even kill his hero. And already post-factum, after the triumphant success of "Kalyna Red", to his grave came many of the old enemies, including director Stanislav Rostotsky. It was he who, together with Tatiana Lioznova and Grigory Britikov closed the unrealized "Stepan Razin" at the stage of development at Gorky Studio" (Afanasyev, 2019).

In 2019, the restored *Kalina Red* was shown at the Venice Film Festival and this show was one of the brightest events of this world forum.

The comedy *Afonja* (1975) was watched by 62.2 million viewers (fifteenth place among all USSR films).

Afonja is the most box office film of the remarkable director Georgy Danelia. True, there is no lyrical charm of the film *I'm Walking in Moscow*, the wise irony and philosophical depth of *Autumn Marathon*... But there are brilliant acting works by Leonid Kuravlev and Yevgeny Leonov and mocking satirical fairy tale with a happy ending. Leonid Kuravlev plays the charming boor who feels in the mismanagement of Soviet "developed socialism" as a fish in water. This modern "proletarian" who enjoys his power over ordinary people who find themselves in a desperate situation because of leaking pipes, sinks and toilets... At one time, film critics rebuked the director that he (instead of making the final satirical verdict) sent him in the final romantic love in the image of the angelic heroine. But so the fairy tale is the same, so that the good sorceress can always please the hapless Ivanushka, who drank the drivers from the well Baba Yaga...

Some critics of the Soviet era tried to integrate *Afonja* into a strict socialist edifying series, arguing that the authors "created a character that bears the features of a social conflict affecting one of the most pressing problems of modern society – responsibility, duty to it" (Ignatieva, 1975: 53).

Film critic Peter Shepotinnik went even further here: "The world of *Afonja* and his entourage was created by G. Danelia so visibly, so vividly and convincingly that we are entitled to demand from the authors an answer to the question: can *Afonja* find the strength to overcome himself in order to become human? But this question, in my opinion, was asked by the authors not acutely enough. ...because Danelia herself showed us how terrible such a person is. ... But he has to overcome a much farther distance on the road to Afanasy than that sudden revival, the truthfulness of which should have been justified, but, in my opinion, is not justified by the lyricism of the film" (Shepotinnik, 1976: 67).

The film critic Yuri Bogomolov expressed himself more gracefully in this regard, arguing that in this film "the comic intonation is perceived as an apologizing intonation for its too precise and truthful character" (Bogomolov, 1975: 3).

However, on the whole, Y. Bogomolov assessed the work of Danelia positively: "*Afonja* is a good comedy, more interesting than many. Here you can see the real life texture, the picture is inhabited by living people, aptly captured and accurately generalized, there are excellent acting works. ... G. Danelia's artistic principle is to show how life, taken in its natural movement, turns into a comedy" (Bogomolov, 1975: 2).

Much freer post-Soviet film critics are sure that "the success of "*Afonja*" was a social phenomenon equal to the boom of neo-realism" (Gorelov, 2018), and in this film, comedy seemed to cover the anxious line of the author's "moral anxiety" (Nefedov, 2015).

Melodrama *Stepmother* (1973) only in the first distribution year received almost 60 million viewers (eighteenth place among all Soviet films).

Metropolitan filmmakers almost did not notice the *Stepmother* on his film horizon (one exception was an article by T. Khlopyankina in *Soviet Screen*). But provincial reviewers have already then estimated the film differently: "I saw the touched faces of people leaving the cinema theater. The film avoided sweets, although the material, like no other, most of all had to it. But the creative team very accurately assessed the danger posed by the components of melodrama in the

overall motif of the film and therefore achieved much more valuable than mere shudder" (Kim, 1973).

Already in the XXI century, Russian film critics were able to understand the emotional appeal of this melodrama: *"An old teacher wisely reminded that even a plant, not to wither and bloom, it takes time and heat. In translation into the language of human relations – requires patience and love, love and patience. It is necessary to see the face of the heroine, sad, crying, but enlightened at the moment when before a brief Light calls her "mother" ... The strongest, indelible impression!"* (Nefedov, 2017).

And film historian and critic Sergei Kudryavtsev suggested that *"to some extent, such a stormy reaction of the audience in the same year both to "Kalina Red" about a criminal who remembers his mother and conscience, and to "Stepmother" about a woman who tried to love someone else's daughter more than her own children, testifies to the fact that in the depths of people's consciousness ... there is still hope: none of us is a "stranger among our own".* (Kudryavtsev, 2007).

The comedy *Office Romance* (1978) by Eldar Ryazanov only in the first distribution received 58.4 million viewers (nineteenth place among all movies of the USSR). His Russian remake entitled *Office Romance. Our Time* (2011), of course, could not count on such a huge audience, but it starred the current president of Ukraine Vladimir Zelensky.

Soviet film critics accepted the *Office Romance* warmly. For example, Victor Bozhovich in the *Soviet Screen* wrote that *"our meeting with a comedy, marked by explosions of laughter and touched tears ... E. Ryazanov and E. Braginsky once again confirmed that they know how to mix and excite, talk about serious fun and not falling into edification. "Office Romance" belongs to the movies that are commonly called "spectator". It is a great honour for cinematographers to deserve such a name without acting on the demands of art"* (Bozovich, 1978: 3).

Valentin Mikhalkovich (1937–2006) in the *Cinema Art* was more strict, noting that in comparison with *Irony of Fate* in the *Office Romance* *"the story is more thorough, more complete; it has lost its anecdotal character, more firmly rooted in reality. But, on the other hand, it eroded novelty, freshness and charm of the just completed discovery of the previously unknown side of life. ... Plus, sometimes it seems that the picture is trampled on the spot, too slowly drawn to the final"* (Mikhalkovich, 1978: 47).

Returning to the reasons for the success of the *Office Romance*, post-Soviet film critic Eugene Nefedov writes about the image of the main character – a modest accountant Novoseltsev in the brilliant performance of Andrei Myagkov – as one of the main luck of the film: *"Average (which indirectly indicates and "talking" place of action!) the Soviet employee secretly dreamed of being like Samokhvalov: to have an imposing look and a well-articulated speech, to hold a high position, to receive business trips abroad, to live in a multi-room apartment decorated in a fashionable manner, in a Western style, and to drive a personal car with a built-in stereo music system. As a rule, it turned out to be Novoseltsev, who was sitting in the same place, with an unsettled personal life and no bright prospects in general. With the submission of the writer and playwright Emil Braginsky Eldar Ryazanov was truly "great comforter", wisely, with a sly smile, with a sparkling fiction and almost a childish sense of naughtiness, showing that sometimes dreams have the property to come true"* (Nefedov, 2009).

And I fully agree with E. Nefedov that today *"the fading Ryazanov's work is valued first of all for the most accurate (and subtlest) photographic casts from his Time. As evidence of a whole epoch of relative stability and prosperity, in which people lived, quarreled, worked and fell in love – generation after generation"* (Nefedov, 2009).

In 2011, the current Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky played the role of Novoseltsev in a Russian remake of Ryazanov's comedy entitled *Office Romance. Our Time*.

Russian film critics have justifiably defeated this cheeky forgery for the legendary Ryazanov hit.

Nina Tsyrukun in *Cinema Art* sadly stated that in the new version Kalugina (Svetlana Khodchenkova) and Novoseletsev (Vladimir Zelensky) are just faceless ordinary personages of an endless series of "office" comedies (Tsyrukun, 2011).

The conclusions of film critic Lidia Maslova, in my opinion, even tougher and more accurate: *"The main disaster of the new "Office Romance", of course, Novoseltsev (Vladimir Zelensky): ... when a producer by a wilful decision assigns to a completely unsuitable to him the role of himself, not having not only the acting ability, but at least a minimal charisma, becomes to tears pity all the other participants in the experiment"* (Maslova, 2011).

By the way, you don't have to be a prophet if you claim that if another famous film by Eldar Ryazanov, *Irony of Fate, or With an Easy Steam!* (1975) would not have been released first on television but in cinemas, it would have easily made it to the top thirty most box office Soviet films.

Stunning success of the lyrical comedy–tale *Irony of Fate* is unique, *"this picture has never and nothing to interrupt. Because its authors by random insight, as all Russians, drunken loops on white and fluffy jumped on the secret formula of the Russian film, which since the beginning of perestroika vainly trying to derive a laboratory way nasty non–drinking people in ties and boots on a thin sole"* (Gorelov, 2018).

However, it should be noted that "non–drinking people in ties" in 2007, after all, were able to rent a sequel called *Irony of Fate. Continuation*, earned in the box office of 55 million dollars, so it became clear: the old recipes can give a tangible cash effect in a completely different social era...

In the year of the release of the *Irony of Fate* on TV screen, Soviet film critics spoke in one voice about its fabulous nature: the article by V. Mikhalkovich (1937–2006) in the magazine *Cinema Art* was called "How to put together a fairy tale," and a review by Y. Khanyutin (1929–1978) in the *Soviet Screen* was called "Tales for different ages".

Reasons for his generally positive opinion on the *Irony of Fate* Y. Hanyutin wrote that *"it is not for nothing that in accordance with the requirements of the fairy tale ... heroes are tested, the art must withstand their friendship, love, decency. This fairy tale is democratic"* (Hanyutin, 1976: 4).

True, V. Mikhalkovich, in my opinion, very accurately noticed that *"the authors play a rather harsh game with a fairy tale – they tease, lure out, and immediately slipping into it some everyday peripetias, so that the fairy tale will fade away and hide again. ... A man needs fairy tales, but everyone must create them himself"* (Mikhalkovich, 1976: 40, 46).

In the XXI century the *Irony of Fate* became a reason for solid culturological research. In particular, N. Lesskis wrote that the popularity of the *Irony of Fate* is *largely due to the fact that Ryazanov used literary (sacred story) and cultural (semantic halo of alcohol) traditions important to the intellectual consciousness of the 1970s; being brought into the medial sphere, they became of general significance. The seemingly unique success of the film "Irony of Fate" is connected with the attraction of contexts, motifs and genres that are elitist for the modern cultural situation. It presents – in a rather atypical way – a model for the resolution of one of the key conflicts of the era: the creation of an absolutely private space, beyond any external social and ideological regulation"* (Lesskis, 2005).

This was followed by conclusions regarding the main socio–cultural message of the *Irony of Fate*: *"The main social conflicts in the 1970s are born out of the interaction of the official, public and private spheres of life. It is interesting that these conflicts do not arise because of excessive pressure from above, but because of devaluation, loss of internal motivation for mobilization. The decline of enthusiasm, in turn, leads to social depression, and the need for a miracle and the transformation of a dreary surrounding reality creates a social demand for such mass genres as, for example, sacred storytelling. It is curious that dislike of the existing social structure, social criticism in one form or another, is stored in the memory of this genre"* (Lesskis, 2005).

Well, and, of course, Russian young generation of the XXI century has brought an sharp rejection of the *Irony of Fate*. So N. Radulova with her neo–ethical courage of the subversive idol of the past attacked the film by Eldar Ryazanov in the following passage: *"I am afraid that soon I will be arrested for desecration of national sanctities, but I do not like the "Irony of Fate". I don't like the three women reclaiming a thirty–six–year–old overgrown from each other. I don't like the overgrown man himself, this New Year's sex symbol of the mint country. And most of all I don't like the way we love all these heroes, how we believe that this is the real Christmas story, in which good people make everyone around them happy and find their own happiness"* (Radulova, 2007).

But, as they say, the caravan goes... *Irony of Fate* still holds millions of Russian viewers chained to TV screens every year.

War and Peace (1965–1967). In the first distribution year, this large–scale adaptation of the novel by Leo Tolstoy was seen by 58 million viewers (twentieth place among all movies in the USSR). Bondarchuk's film also received an Oscar.

Famous Soviet / Russian literary and film critic Lev Anninsky (1934–2019) wrote about this film by Sergei Bondarchuk: *"For several months there have been disputes around "War and Peace". And every time in some professional particular everything slips away, and your opponent, victoriously pointing out that Pierre is old, Andrei is shy, and the scene in the salon*

Cherer tightened, begins, in turn, to agree that yes, Shengraben and Austerlitz filmed beautifully, and Natasha on the screen amazingly loyal, and Captain Tushin stunned ... And, having exchanged in this way, what do you think we're throwing at each other? If on the professional line everything is laid out on the undisputed "pluses – minuses" – closer to Tolstoy, farther from Tolstoy – so why this general involvement in the case, why the event? ... Sergei Bondarchuk ... decided to go to Tolstoy absolutely and completely. He trusted him as an obedient student. For several years, he breathed Tolstoy as a shrine, afraid to retreat even in a letter, the last detail of value as a whole monologue or character ... Yes, it's an act, and it's a courageous act. And this (from my point of view) is the only true path to genius: his world must be taken as a whole, he must be trusted" (Anninsky, 1966).

Sergei Bondarchuk's work was also very well received abroad. After awarding the War and Peace Oscar, the famous American film critic Roger Ebert (1942–2013) wrote that *"the Russian version of "War and Peace" is a magnificently unique film. Money isn't everything, but you can't make an epic without it. And "War and Peace" is the definitive epic of all time. It is hard to imagine that circumstances will ever again combine to make a more spectacular, expensive, and — yes — splendid movie. ... It is easy enough to praise director Sergei Bondarchuk for his thundering battle scenes, or his delicate ballroom scenes, or the quality of his actors. But these were almost to be expected. What is extraordinary about "War and Peace" is that Bondarchuk was able to take the enormous bulk of Leo Tolstoy's novel and somehow transform it into this great chunk of film without losing control along the way. ... Bondarchuk, however, is able to balance the spectacular, the human, and the intellectual. Even in the longest, bloodiest, battle scenes there are vignettes that stand out: A soldier demanding a battlefield commendation, a crazed horse whirling away from an explosion, an enigmatic exchange between Napoleon and his lieutenants. Bondarchuk is able to bring his epic events down to comprehensible scale without losing his sense of the spectacular. And always he returns to Tolstoy's theme of men in the grip of history" (Ebert, 1969).*

Contemporary Russian film critics also appreciate this outstanding work of film art, stressing that the film *War and Peace* is *"a reference screen adaptation of Tolstoy's novel, where even in the third decade roles are occupied by people, each of whom could have founded his own film school. An epic masterpiece of unprecedented scale, striking the imagination and half a century after its creation" (Kushnir, 2017).*

Indeed, here *"coincided the director's ambitions and an important government order – to answer the Americans with a more majestic film epic than the one without a historical background and even a few chamber love "fiction in Hollywood" ... If we evaluate the success of Bondarchuk's project from this point of view, ... it is impossible not to admit that the style of the epic novel, capturing the private fates of the heroes in close connection with the historical destiny of an entire nation was still captured and transmitted (maybe not without errors) by the Russian director. It was not by chance that he was then invited to a production of Waterloo, which talked about Napoleon's collapse on the fields of Europe after his flight from Russia" (Kudryavtsev, 2006).*

And today, after many attempts to screen Leo Tolstoy's brilliant novel, it is clearly seen that the place of Bondarchuk's film adaptation of *War and Peace* in the pantheon of film history is undeniable.

Only the first year of the demonstration in cinemas *Earthly Love* (1974) received 51 million viewers, and *Destiny* (1977) – 57.8 million viewers (twenty-first place among all movies in the USSR).

Very positively assessing the large-scale diology of Evgeny Matveev (1922–2003) *Earthly Love* and *Destiny*, film critic N. Tolchenova in her review, published in *Cinema Art*, decided that the best way to express the director and performer of the main male role in the heroic and romantic pathos is to quote from the report of the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Leonid Brezhnev: *"Nothing elevates a person as much as an active life position, a conscious attitude to public duty"*, and most importantly, in the Matveev's diology – *"the feat of the people and the Communist party, as always in the forefront of the struggle for the socialist Fatherland" (Tolchenova, 1977: 34, 40).*

V. Podgornov also gave a generally positive assessment of *Destiny* in Soviet Screen, however, he also noticed disadvantages: *"There are repetitions, unnecessary details, and simply unconvincing characters. ... should not be quoted in such detail in "Destiny" footage from the first film – from "Earthly Love" (Podgornov, 1978: 2).*

Reviewer of the *Soviet Screen* E. Gromov (1931–2005) was a little less complementary, noting, for example, that in *Earthly Love* "the figure of a former fist–saboteur with a cut in his hands seems to have stepped on the screen straight from the movies and novels of the thirties". (Gromov, 1975: 3).

In post–Soviet times, film historian Klara Isayeva, who was skeptical about the creative work of Evgeny Matveyev in the 1980s–1990s, attributed *Earthly Love* and *Destiny* (despite their distinct ideology) to the best of his works, with *high voltage current* (Isaeva, 2010: 296–298).

Many today's viewers still love Matveev's emotional cinematography. I will quote only one comment (Kino–Theatre.ru portal): "Time sifted away E. Matveev's films?! Maybe only in your fantasies? Matveev's films are deeply patriotic, in every frame – a great love for his Motherland. And it's impossible to watch "Destiny" without a coma in your throat. Where's the situation there?! And what music!" (O. Sergeeva).

Melodrama *Russian Field* (1971) received 56.2 million viewers (twenty–second place among all movies of the USSR). This film was directed by Nikolai Moskalenko (1926–1974), the director of popular with the audience movies *Crane* (1968) and *Young People* (1971). It is difficult to say how in the future would have formed the creative fate of this director, but, alas, soon after the premiere of *Russian Field*, he died, and never lived to his half–century anniversary and forever remained the author of only three feature films...

The actor Vladimir Tikhonov (1950–1990) played his main film role in *Russian Field*. Impressive handsome, son of star parents – V. Tikhonov and N. Mordyukova – he gave high hopes, but, unfortunately, addicted to drugs and died after barely passing the forty–year mark...

Soviet film critics in general reacted to the *Russian Field* quite reserved: *Soviet screen* did not even publish a review of it, replacing it with fragments of letters from viewers who admired this picture.

Y. Zubkov's review in the *Cinema Art* was clearly designed to support this very popular movie. Especially film critic praised the bright acting work of Nonna Mordyukova: "If we sum up what N. Mordyukova, we can say: this is her film" (Zubkov, 1972: 37).

And in general, summing up his reflections on the *Russian Field*, Y. Zubkov focused on the main female image of this picture: "The beauty, human beauty against the background of the beauty of his native land – about this film "Russian Field". A film in which the main thing is the character of a modern Russian woman, a collective farmer, seen in all its significance, strength, truth and, consequently, spiritual beauty" (Zubkov, 1972: 43).

Opinions of today's viewers about the *Russian Field* differ polarly: from unrestrained delights to complete rejection:

– "This picture will not leave a single person indifferent – that's what used to make films. "Russian Field" – a truly stunning film, it stuns the depth and imbued with the play of actors, the vitality of the plot, the boundless spacious beauty of the land of Russia and Russian nature ... Film–epopee, film legend, a masterpiece ... One of the best in Russian cinematography" (S. Ageev).

– "A low bow to all creators of this Russian film, which glorifies labor and ordinary Russian man of labor! This film contains hundreds of times more feelings and experiences than 200 episodes of any current series!" (Sergei Mikhailovich).

– "I don't like this movie. And I never did. ... Artists are all under fifty, and they're having a youth fight. ... This is the feeling that a dead man is being brought to life" (M. Jiganskaya).

– "Terrible, talentless, worthless film" (S. Smirnov).

Military epic *Liberation* (1969–1971) received 56 million viewers (23rd place among all Soviet films).

To some extent, this film was conceived as a Soviet response to the numerous Western fighters singing feats of arms of the American and British troops during the Second World War, although, of course, it was primarily intended for viewers of the USSR, including the young.

It is clear that *Cinema Art* in the review of *Liberation* was simply obliged to listen to the "general line of the party" in the evaluation of this military film epic, and this task was brilliantly done by the editorial office:

"The assessment of such a complex and multifaceted work as "Liberation" depends on the answer to the question: have authors, directors and actors managed to find and truthfully show the main thing that characterizes the chosen theme, to create a generalized artistic image of the Soviet Army of the liberation of peoples, to reveal and show the driving forces of the liberation process? To this question we can firmly give a positive answer: yes, we did. ... Giving serious

importance to the correct, objective coverage of the history of our state, the Communist Party calls on filmmakers to create high-profile and truthful feature films about the past war, films that in all their glory show the heroic exploits of the older generation of Soviet people and call on new generations to follow the example of their fathers. "Liberation" is a worthy answer to this call" (Voltishch, 1972: 41, 53).

In the spirit of the ideological demands of the time, film critic Nikolai Sumenov (1938–2014) noting that the "Liberation" was convincingly reflected in how the shock forces of world imperialism crashed, meeting on their way a monolithic multinational state of workers and peasants who defended in the war the freedom and independence of their country, the Motherland of Lenin, the Motherland of the Great October Revolution" (Sumenov, 1978: 78).

Today we can agree that "Liberation" (to a lesser extent – the subsequent works of Ozerov, conceived as thematic extensions) was not just a prominent event in the cultural life of that time, but also one of the symbols of the entire Brezhnev era" (Nefedov, 2016). Of course, this film epic is imbued with ideology (well, isn't it in Hollywood movies about the war?), but the scale and scope of the battle footage is still striking, and the military feat of the soldiers who fought for their land is, of course, beyond doubt...

Strong in Spirit (1967) received 55.2 million viewers (twenty-five place among all movies in the USSR). Victor Georgiev's (1937–2010) suspense film, which tells the dramatic story of the Soviet scout Nikolai Kuznetsov (1911–1944) was met by critics quite warmly.

V. Diachenko in the *Cinema Art* noted that this is "honest, intelligent and, in my opinion, in something unexpected film, the subject of which was the psychology of a Soviet man forced at a terrible time for the country and people to act against the enemy under the guise of the enemy. The film is not about intelligence, but about scouts. The task is harder, but more interesting" (Diachenko, 1968: 23).

At the same time, the film critic wrote that "in the handwriting of the director there is no student uncertainty, although, unfortunately, not much and boldness. But this is understandable: the first major production, and even in such an insidious genre, and even with voluntarily accepted complicating conditions. It seems that it was these additional tasks that limited director V. Georgiev in his search for acute temporal and rhythmic solutions to certain scenes and episodes. I can imagine how difficult it was for the authors to solve the final episode of the film. Documentary accuracy was impossible here for many reasons, and a free flight of fancy would violate the film's style. As often happens in such cases, the compromise solution was a poetic image. There is nothing to oppose it, it is a pity that the visibly prolonged and poetically unfocused finale does not have a final point, which is not the end of the plot, but the end of the theme" (Diachenko, 1968: 26).

Besides, Diachenko's general texture of the film did not seem too convincing: "I understand that the authors are right when they do not show us the horrors of Nazi occupation through gallows, mass shootings and torture. In the quiet town of Rovno, the Nazi "order" did indeed look like a kind of "order". But I obviously lack in the film the feeling of inexpressibly complex, unnatural social-psychological climate of occupation" (Diachenko, 1968: 25).

Many of today's Russian viewers warmly remember *Strong in Spirit* as one of the brightest stories about Soviet scouts in the enemy's rear:

– "It's a wonderful film, I remember as a child the whole family went to the movie theater several times. Now it is sometimes shown, but would like to see more often such a movie" (V. Bunina).

– "When I first watched that movie, I was just wildly excited! It's a great war movie! It's a fascinating story! I watched and thought how well thought up the events, but when I read who was Kuznetsov, and that the film is based on the true facts, and how he actually died ... Cilinski, who perfectly played Kuznetsov, went into the background with his beauty, and opened all the tragedy of the fate of a simple Russian man who just wants to bow in silence. And it's right that they made such an end, because the way Kuznetsov died is actually very scary, it's scary to know, not to show. You don't have to kill the spectator, let him have hope that Smith survived... or it's a painful end... it's impossible to watch, everything inside turns around" (Laurel).

Musical Woman Who Sings (1979) received almost 55 million viewers (twenty-sixth place among all movies in the USSR). Director Alexander Orlov during his cinematic career has put 18 films. Among them were such notable works as *The Mystery of Edwin Drude* (1980) and *Strange Story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1985). However, only the musical *Woman Who Sings* (1979) was able to enter the top thirty most box office Soviet films.

Film critics of the late 1980s met *Woman Who Sings* quite cool. For example, I wrote in 1979 that the musical *Woman Who Sings* was apparently conceived as a dramatic story about the hard way singer Anna Streltsova (analogy with the lead singer Alla Pugacheva is obvious here) to recognition, a kind of world of entertainers. Well, there's a lot of music and dancing here. Thus the majority of songs became known and managed to be remembered even before a picture in hire. There were also melodies specially written for the film. All of them may be good in themselves, but not all of them, as it seems to me, are combined with screen action, and others are perceived as insertion numbers, shot too traditionally. It's as if you couldn't come up with anything more spectacular and colorful...

As for the plot part, it is impossible to believe that on the screen is the birth of the singer: both at the beginning and at the end of the film, Anna Streltsova sings with the skill of a star. It remains to assume that the "birth" was to choose "his" song. But here we should also say that the song that sounds at the very beginning of "Song about me" is not inferior in sincerity to the song that gave the name to the picture.

In general, thanks to the efforts of Alla Pugacheva, the picture has not become a standard TV show, but, alas, remained somewhere between the concert and the film...

Now, in fact, *"scolded by critics for vulgarity and concession to the mass indecipherable tastes, this cinema hit ... suddenly can surprise after decades of human intonation in a story about a popular singer and unexpectedly his claim to be quite accurate document "era of Pugacheva. Although at the moment of the release of this movie on the screen and its audience triumph, all private scenes of a semi-autobiographical nature seemed to many critics only to spoil the impression of the true mini-dramas played by singer Alla Pugacheva during the performance of her songs"* (Kudryavtsev, 2007).

And it seems to be true that Evgeny Nefedov is right, *"the authors found (apparently intuitively felt) a counterpoint that predetermined the success of the whole film production. Yes, the plot required better elaboration (some plot lines seem to be torn, hanging in the air), not all actors had an opportunity to reveal their characters, etc. But Orlov and Stepanov proceeded from the generally correct assumption that the audience is waiting for musical numbers first – the more, the better. Deepening into the aesthetics of a film-concert or even a video clip"* (Nefedov, 2018).

The drama *Little Vera* (1988) was watched by 55 million spectators in cinemas in the first year of its demonstration (27th place by attendance among all films of the USSR).

In Soviet perestroika times, film critic V. Bozhovich was one of numerous supporters of this debut film of V. Pichul:

"Little Vera", while its authors are young, seems to me a work most mature and promising. It is absolutely no stylistic delights, but achieved a rare unity between the plot, the manner of storytelling, visual solutions ... play actors, reaching a full match between the situation, gesture, replica and intonation. Those who do not like the film (and there will surely be many of them), will throw him a reproach for naturalism. I do not agree with this reproach. ... The authors of "Little Vera", screenwriter Maria Khmelik and director Vasily Pichul, do not tend to write off human inferiority in the domestic environment. Here the heroes do not resist the circumstances, do not suffer under their anger, but exist with them in some sluggish harmony. Too frank a depiction of the sexual entertainment of young people outraged many. And the other is not outraged? The whole picture of life, the truth of which can hardly be doubted, is not outraged? ... The authors of "Little Vera" look with cold eyes at their recent peers, they are not broken, they do not denounce, they do not idealize: this is life. It's like they don't want to convince anyone of anything, and maybe that's why their film becomes particularly convincing. This film is resolutely unwilling to tint or sweeten anything. It gives a social diagnosis and does not claim to be more. If you want to see life as it is, go and watch "Little Vera". If you want to be "made beautiful", helped to preserve your spiritual comfort – at your service there are many other films, a full range of comforting and entertaining surrogates. Only I prefer "Little Vera" and hope that it will open a new direction in our cinema – the direction of severe and bitter realism. I think, in terms of public consciousness, that's exactly what we need now" (Bozhovich, 1990: 128).

The film critic Y. Bogomolov was more restrained, though also praised the *Little Vera*:

"Some people are giving this movie the moral score, which should be addressed to the society, which for quite a long time seduced and seduced about its social well-being and moral health, and then fell into hibernation. ... It turned out that there was no cleavage between generations (as one might think when watching the movie "The Courier"), but a chasm.

Soundproof partitions were formed between people in "Little Vera". Usually in conflicts between "fathers" and "children", the latter embody the ideal, romantic beginning. Here, both generations are mired in semi-conscious frustration and completely unconscious mutual anger. ... However, the courage of the authors has its limits. You can see that at some point they couldn't help but smooth out the sharpness of the collision. This is expressed in the fact that "children" are slightly romanticized, that is, they appear more consciously living. They even show a sort of moral account to "fathers". They experience a kind of reflexion about their own way of life" (Bogomolov, 1990: 129).

And then film critic S. Shumakov looked at *Little Vera* from a different perspective:

"It prevents me to admire the skill of the director, who with such brilliance recreated on the screen a creepy picture of modern morals, something that could be called unwitting arrogance. Not in the insulting sense that the author looks squeamishly at his characters, understanding that both they and their children are condemned from birth to live in a pig's way, but in the sense that I think that the author himself has not yet fully understood for himself the position that he takes in relation to his characters. This is especially true when comparing the portraits of "fathers" and "children". Alas, here we must admit that in the film, as often as in life, "children" exist at the expense of "fathers". In the film, children look more relaxed and clever because the stupider, primitive, and sometimes caricatured look adults. And in this reverse dependence is concluded some lie. The director is trying to knock it down, to neutralize it. He is constantly gaining distance, trying to stay within the limits of an objective view, but as soon as he succeeds, something even more terrible opens up – emptiness. And in this "dark kingdom", where all are "chained together" and forever pressed to the ground, can not break through not only the beam – even a glimpse of light. Perhaps this conclusion will seem to someone as a revelation. I confess that I am already bored of watching movies about love, all the pathos of which comes down to the idea of its total impossibility" (Shumakov, 1990: 131).

In post-Soviet times, *Little Vera* is increasingly perceived as the most iconic film of the Soviet "perestroika" era:

"Little Vera" is the most visible symbol of perestroika cinema and – perestroika ruin in the heads. Undoubtedly, there were others – all kinds of harlequinos, accidents, inter-girls, burglars and fans. But they all fade and fade next to the tragedy of empty-headed Vera. Perhaps Pichul's undeniable talent affected? The film is ugly and malicious, but bright, cruel and strong" (Ivankina, 2015).

A sharp detective *The Tavern on Pyatnitskaya* (1978) was released in the USSR in the late 1970s and became one of the public favorites: only the first year of the demonstration in cinemas saw 54 million viewers (29th place among all movies in the USSR).

Critics of that time met this film is quite approving, while emphasizing the "party" placed ideological accents:

"The creators of "Tavern on Pyatnitskaya" thought about how to make each frame of his film interesting. The high professionalism of the director plays an important role here. The action of the movie is developing rhythmically and rapidly, not delayed by unnecessary repetitions. ... And, finally, the main thing. The range of problems that affect filmmakers ... is very serious and complex. The establishment of a new law and order, the first, very difficult steps of the workers' and peasants' police, the interaction of the old frames of the Moscow criminal investigation with yesterday's heroes of the battles with the White Guard who came to the party's call – all this was convincingly reflected in the film" (Andreev, 1978: 2).

It is interesting that even now, forty years after its release, *Tavern on Pyatnitskaya* still causes controversy among viewers (further quotes spectator comments on the Internet).

Viewers' opinions are in favor:

– *"The film is wonderful, interesting and exciting. I especially liked, of course, Pasha-America, colorful and memorable image. I also liked the work of Nikolai Eremenko" (Jozef).*

– *"Excellent film, and what a wonderful ensemble of actors! Eremenko has always loved, and Galibin became interested after watching this film, began to watch films precisely because of his participation. Tamara Semina is one of the genius actresses in general" (S. Voityuk).*

Viewer's opinions are "against":

– *"Spectators went because there were not enough action movies at the box office. After the irony that the entire film was shot from a single revolver. Disposable picture" (Oleg K.).*

– *"Purely propagandistic socialist film about the work of a brilliant Soviet police in the den of enemies of Soviet power, or rather – in a gang. "Tavern on Pyatnitskaya" is that terrible place*

where all the forces of hell are concentrated – the enemies of the revolution. ... The film quite one-sidedly interprets everything that is happening on the territory of the new socialist state, idealizing the people's devotion to the new government" (Nikola).

Another detective – *Petrovka, 38* (1980) received 53.4 million viewers.

One of the most famous film critics of the USSR – Victor Demin (1937–1993) wrote about *Petrovka, 38*:

"The recipe for such movies seems very simple. It takes one or two mysterious incidents, faint traces leading to a dead end, one fleeting detail, gradually growing into irrefutable evidence, two or three chases, and one with a shootout. The space between the plot pillars is filled with conversations with witnesses and victims, sharp verbal fights with the main villain's friend. ... Main personages are silent and restrained, clever and perceptive, clever and resourceful, and their enemies are impertinent, but cowardly, knocked off the honest path of drunkenness and drugs, a habit of living at someone else's expense. At the table of the investigator, they are either morosely silent, or willingly hurry to lay out everything they know, or, throwing their head, howling completely wolfish: "I hate, h-a-t-e...". In a word, everything is as it should be in a romantic story with an adventurous background" (Demin, 1980).

In a similar vein I wrote in the same 1980: Once again before us a story about those whose service is dangerous and difficult. The intrigue here is quite traditional. And almost from the first frame it's clear who the criminal is. However, thanks to the charm of famous actors, the film does not look boring. Undoubtedly, and the guards of order, and their opponent is shown in the picture quite schematically. However, in detectives so happens all together and close. After all, you have to keep up with the chase (by the way, well filmed) on the busy streets of Moscow and hand-to-hand combat with the bandits. It's only a pity that nothing new is being introduced into the development of the genre. The film obviously lacks ingenuity, freshness of film language, fantasy, finally...

Petrovka, 38 is not forgotten and in the XXI century. This is what film critic Denis Gorelov writes about it: *"Audience was ready to close his eyes to any plot absurdities, to believe in careless collectors of Antiques and the arrest of the recidivist by looking into the eyes of passers-by on Gorky Street. The viewer no longer needed a Soviet detective with his procedural pedantry, black gloves and difficult adolescents from wealthy families"* (Gorelov, 2018).

Thus, I can conclude that among the 30 most popular Soviet films, entertainment genres (comedy, detective, melodrama, action movie) dominate, and it is clear from this that it is the supporters of these genres that lead the list of the most box office directors in the USSR.

4. Results

Analysis of the list of 300 most popular Soviet films of the 1930s – 1980s ([Appendix 1](#)) showed that first and second place (9 films each among 300 most popular Soviet films) was shared by directors Eldar Ryazanov and Ivan Pyryev:

Eldar Ryazanov (1927–2015):

Office Romance (1978), 58.4 million viewers;

The Incredible Adventures of Italians in Russia (1974), 49.2 million viewers;

Hussar Ballad (1962), 48.6 million spectators;

Carnival Night (1956), 48.6 million spectators;

The Girl Without Address (1958), 36.6 million viewers;

Station for Two (1983), 35.8 million viewers;

Old Robbers (1972), 31.5 million spectators;

Give the Complaint Book (1965), 29.9 million viewers,

Beware of the Car (1966), 29.0 million viewers.

(hereafter, the figures of the film's attendance in cinemas in the first year of the distribution are specified).

Ivan Pyryev (1901–1968):

Kuban Cossacks (1950), 40.6 million viewers;

Tractor Drivers (1939), 37.0 million viewers;

Light of a Distant Star (1965), 36.2 million spectators;

Piggy Girl and Shepherd (1941), 36.0 million spectators;

The Rich Bride (1938), 34.2 million viewers;

The Tale of the Land of Siberia (1948), 33.8 million viewers;

The Trial of Fidelity (1954), 31.9 million viewers;

The Idiot (1958), 31.0 million viewers;

The Brothers Karamazov (1969), 29.3 million viewers.

At first glance, these figures contain a contradiction: After all, such hits of Ivan Pyryev 1930's, such as *Tractor Drivers* (1939), *Piggy Girl and Shepherd* (1941) and *The Rich Bride* (1938) were shown at the box office at a time when Soviet films have almost disappeared from the sharp competition from Western (primarily Hollywood) products, but none of the Pyryev's "folk films" managed to overcome the barrier of 41 million viewers in the first year of the distribution, while Ryazanov's audience exceeded this threshold by three films (and this is in conditions when the Soviet screens of the second half of the 1950s – 1960s and 1970s were not so few foreign films).

By the way, the most popular comedies Grigory Alexandrov 1930's also could not get to the 40 millionth barrier: *Marry Guys* (1934), 30.0 million viewers, *Volga Volga* (1938) – 30.0 million viewers, *Circus* (1936) – 28.0 million viewers.

In fact, two main factors played a role here: significant population growth (1937: 164.5 million inhabitants; 1939: 170.5 million inhabitants; 1953: 188.7 million inhabitants; 1959: 208.8 million inhabitants; 1970: 241.7 million inhabitants; 1979: 262.4 million inhabitants) and the number of cinemas in the USSR (1934: 29.2 thousand; 1951: 42.0 thousand; 1960: 103.4 thousand; 1972: 156.9 thousand).

Thus, the population of the USSR in 1979 was 92 million more than in 1939, and the number of cinemas compared to the 1930s had approximately tripled by 1960, and by 1979 – eight times. That is why I can safely put forward the hypothesis that films of such significant audience potential, such as *Office Romance*, *Hussar Ballad* and *Carnival Night*, in the 1930s, too, could not overcome the bar attendance of the *Tractor Drivers* (1939).

Third place goes to director Leonid Gaidai (1923–1993): 8 films among 300 most popular Soviet films:

Diamond Hand (1969), 76.7 million viewers;

Caucasian Captive (1967), 76.5 million viewers;

Operation "Y" and other adventures of Shurik (1965), 69.6 million viewers;

Ivan Vasilyevich changes his profession (1973), 60.7 million viewers;

Sportloto–82 (1982), 55.2 million spectators;

No, it can't be! (1975), 50.9 million spectators;

Twelve Chairs (1971), 39.3 million viewers;

Behind Matches (1980), 34.3 million viewers.

However, given that many other films by Leonid Gaidai (*Business People*, *Danger to Life*, etc.) gave very good box-office, and in general, the number of viewers in all his films is higher than in all the films by Eldar Ryazanov.

The decline in attendance at Leonid Gaidai and Eldar Ryazanov's films, which has become clearly visible since the second half of the 1980s, in my opinion, can be explained not only by increased competition on television (where the entertainment component began to increase little by little), but also by a rather dramatic change in the entire repertoire during the so-called perestroika period, when Soviet entertainment films began to compete directly with Western films, not only in cinemas, but also on video.

The fourth place is taken by director Alexander Fynzimmer (1906–1982): 6 films among 300 most popular Soviet films:

Tavern on Pyatnitskaya (1978), 54.1 million viewers;

The Gadfly (1955), 35.2 million viewers;

Girl with a Guitar (1958), 31.9 million viewers;

Fifty–fifty (1974), 31.9 million viewers;

No Right to Mistake (1975), 30.7 million viewers;

The Artist's Farewell Tour (1980), 28.9 million viewers.

After the success of the anti-religious melodrama *The Gadfly* (1955), Alexander Fynzimmer worked mainly in the entertainment genres of detective and comedy, time after time achieving impressive box-office. By the standards of Soviet film criticism, he was considered a director of "second row", however, this did not prevent his films to collect queues at the box office cinemas. A. Fynzimmer did not live up to the epoch of "perestroika", but I believe that if he (as, however, I. Pyryev and G. Aleksandrov) were able to shoot his films in the second half of the 1980s, their attendance for the reasons mentioned above would also have been doomed to a sharp fall...

Fifth to tenth place (4 films each among 300 most popular Soviet films) was shared by directors Boris Durov, Edmond Keosayan, Evgeny Matveyev, Vladimir Rogovoy, Victor Ivchenko and Sergey Gerasimov:

Boris Durov (1937–2007): *Pirates of the XX Century* (1979), 87.6 million viewers; *Can't Say Goodbye* (1982), 34.6 million viewers; *Vertical* (1967) 32.8 million viewers (co-directed by S. Govorukhin); *Story about Chekist* (1969), 30.5 million viewers (co-directed by S. Puchinyan).

Boris Durov became the director of the most box office film in the history of Soviet cinema. His action film *Pirates of the XX Century* (1979) attracted 87.6 million viewers to cinemas in its first distribution year. I can assume that if B. Durov in the hot footsteps created something like *Pirates of the XX Century-2*, in the "stagnant" period 1980–1984 years, he'd be as successful as he was with the movie *Pirates of the XX Century*. However, when his co-director of *Story about Chekist* Stepan Puchinyan did a similar "pirate" action in "perestroika" 1986 (*Mysteries of Madame Wong*), he was able to gather only 30.1 million viewers: the political and socio-cultural situation has changed...

Edmond Keosayan (1936–1994): *The New Adventures of the Elusive* (1969), 66.2 million spectators; *The Crown of the Russian Empire* (1973), 60.8 million spectators; *Elusive Avengers* (1967), 54.5 million spectators; *The Shaggy* (1966), 30.0 million spectators.

Elusive Avengers (1967) for the first distribution year received 54.5 million viewers (twenty-eighth place in the list of the most box office films of the USSR). The sequel to this story (directed by the same E. Keosayan) titled *The New Adventures of the Elusive* (1969) saw 12 million more viewers in its first year (66.2 million and ninth place in the list of the most box office films of the USSR). Audience potential and demand for adventure films of this kind, where young heroes are actively fighting for their romantic ideals, was confirmed even in perestroika (*Gardemarins, go!*, 1987).

Evgeny Matveev (1922–2003): *Destiny* (1978), 57.8 million viewers; *Earthly Love* (1975), 50.9 million viewers; *A Particularly Important Task* (1981), 43.3 million viewers; *The Gypsy* (1967), 37.9 million viewers.

The director of "folk films", aimed largely at the inhabitants of rural areas and the province, Evgeny Matveev (1922–2003) worked in about the same thematic field as Nikolai Moskalenko (1926–1974) and Alexei Saltykov (1934–1993). The success of the series *The Gypsy* (1979) by Alexander Blank (it was remake of Matveev's *The Gypsy*, 1967) proved that bright social and love passions against the background of rural landscapes – one of the possible recipes for success of Soviet cinema. However, Evgeny Matveev managed to prove this and post-Soviet times, putting the only Russian film of the 1990s, fully paid off in distribution – *Love in Russian* (1995).

Vladimir Rogovoy (1923–1983): *Officers* (1971), 53.4 million viewers; *Minors* (1977), 44.6 million viewers; *Boy, Busting Order* (1979), 39.3 million viewers; *Married Bachelor* (1983), 35.6 million viewers.

Vladimir Rogovoy was not a fan of the same genre, but his most successful film was the drama *Officers* (1971), romanticizing the Civil War and emphasizing the patriotism of the Soviet military in the charismatic performance of Vasily Lanov and Georgy Yumatov (1926–1997).

Victor Ivchenko (1912–1972): *Emergency situation* (1959), 47.4 million spectators; *The Fate of Marina* (1954), 37.9 million spectators (co-directed by I. Shmaruk); *Viper* (1965), 34.0 million spectators; *Ivanna* (1959), 30.2 million spectators.

The only one Ukrainian director, who managed to enter the top ten most cash in the USSR, Victor Ivchenko first became famous for the political drama *Emergency situation* (1959), it was a quality film product of the "cold war", which attracted the audience by playing popular actors Mikhail Kuznetsov (1918–1986) and Vyacheslav Tikhonov (1928–2009). The other three films of V. Ivchenko, which were included in the 300 most box office Soviet films, were melodramas, where the bet was made on the main female characters, which fell on the difficult social and political challenges...

Sergey Gerasimov (1906–1985): *Quiet Don* (1958), 47.0 million spectators; *Young Guard* (1948), 42.4 million spectators; *People and Beasts* (1962), 40.3 million spectators; *Love a Person* (1973), 32.2 million spectators.

The popularity of the most box office films of Sergei Gerasimov based on the huge readership success of the novels of Alexander Fadeev (*Young Guard*) and Mikhail Sholokhov (*Quiet Don*). Sergei Gerasimov's author's handwriting, in general, was characteristic of a novel form of film narration, where strong directorial professionalism was supported by psychologically verified acting works.

11–29 places (3 films each among 300 most popular Soviet films) were shared by directors Vladimir Menshov, Alexander Mitta, Vladimir Basov, Stanislav Rostotsky, Sergey Bondarchuk, Nikolai Moskalenko, Alexey Saltykov, Villen Azarov, Jan Fried, Alexander Stolper, Leonid Lukov,

Mikhail Tumanishvili, Herbert Rappaport, Yury Chulukin, Vladimir Fetin, Mikhail Schweitzer, Alexander Leimanis, Boris Volchek, Joseph Heifitz:

Vladimir Menshov (born 1939): *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears* (1979), 84.4 million viewers; *Love and Pigeons* (1984), 44.5 million viewers; *Prank Joke* (1977), 33.8 million viewers.

Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears (1979) was the most important creative success of director Vladimir Menshov. Like his comedy *Love and Doves* (1984), it was done for the widest possible audience.

The story of three provincials who came to Moscow for happiness, told in *Moscow...* in a fairy-tale melodramatic, "Hollywood" key. Using, at first glance, bored situations, familiar dramaturgical moves, the authors every time discover the novelty of old truths, create outstanding characters, relate to serious life problems. Undoubtedly, screenwriter Valentin Chernykh and director Vladimir Menshov got, as it is called, "to the point" of the most secret desires of the audience. Hence the phenomenal box office success of the film, the Soviet State Award and the "Oscar"...

Alexander Mitta (born 1933): *Crew* (1980), 71.1 million viewers; *The Tale of how Tsar Peter married of Arap* (1976), 33.1 million viewers; *Moscow, my love* (1974), 29.2 million viewers.

The most box office of Alexander Mitta was the first Soviet film crash *Crew* (1980). A. Mitta himself has always believed that put a modern fairy tale: *"The need for people to unite in the face of any serious danger – whether the death of an aircraft or the threat of World War III – is the only reasonable way to save. That's the idea of my fairy tale film in the most general sense. ... Tale is an old, centuries-proven form of communication between art and people of all ages, all social groups. Its democratic basis is close to the democratic nature of cinema. Building an absolutely modern plot of the picture, I constantly tested its strength with a fairy tale. That's what I was testing, no more. On the screen, everything must be recognizable to the viewer in the first, everyday, earthly part of the picture and convincingly in the second, in episodes of the disaster. The distant mythological ancestor of the catastrophe is none other than the left or the Fairy Tale Serpent. Only the lefty or the Fairy Tale Serpent these days do not frighten anybody, and brings up courage. Funny, terrible, instructive, entertaining – in fairy tales all this is combined. It is truly a golden pantry of stories, those characters, amazingly resilient and always modern"* (Mitta, 1980).

Curiously, that the successful free remake of *Crew*, made by Nikolai Lebedev in 2016, confirmed the correctness of A. Mitta's words and unrelated plot of the *Crew* to Soviet realities.

Vladimir Basov (1923–1987): *Shield and Sword* (1968), 68.3 million spectators; *Battle on the Road* (1961), 38.3 million spectators; *Silence* (1964), 30.3 million spectators.

Vladimir Basov's early directorial works convincingly prove that in the "thawed" 1960s cash hits were not only entertainment movies, but also such conversational social dramas as *Battle on the Road* (1961) and *Silence* (1964). Filmed by him in the late 1960s spy detective *Shield and Sword* (1968) was the main, but alas, the last brightest hit of Vladimir Basov. With the *Shield and Sword* in Soviet times were able to compete only with such sharp films about spies as *Strong in Spirit* (1968) by Victor Georgiev, *The Way to "Saturn"* (1968) and *The End of "Saturn"* (1968) by Villen Azarov, *Major "Vortex"* (1967) and *Adjutant of His Excellency* (1969) by Evgeny Tashkov, *Error of Resident* (1969) by Veniamin Dorman, *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973) by Tatiana Lioznova and *Variant "Omega"* (1975) by Antonis–Yanis Voyazos.

Stanislav Rostotsky (1922–2001): *The dawns here are quiet...* (1971), 66.0 million viewers; *We'll live till Monday* (1968), 31.0 million viewers; *It Was in Penkov* (1958), 30.5 million viewers.

Screen version of Boris Vasilyev's popular military novel *And the dawns here are quiet...* (1971) took Stanislav Rostotsky to the top of his directorial success. However, he managed to make one of the most cash dramas on the school theme – *We'll live till Monday* (1968). Both of these films still include the "golden fund" of Soviet cinema.

Sergey Bondarchuk (1920–1994): *War and Peace* (1966), 58.0 million viewers; *They Fought for the Motherland* (1975), 40.6 million viewers; *The Fate of Man* (1959), 39.2 million viewers.

One of the most famous Soviet directors – Sergei Bondarchuk – is known throughout the world, above all, a large-scale adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*. However, he managed to find the key to the audience hearts and two screen adaptations of works by Mikhail Sholokhov – war dramas *The Fate of Man* (1959) and *They Fought for the Motherland* (1975).

Nikolai Moskalenko (1926–1974): *Russian Field* (1972), 56.2 million viewers; *Young People* (1973), 39.1 million viewers; *Crane* (1969), 37.2 million viewers.

Directing career of his main rival Evgeny Matveev and Alexey Saltykov – Nikolai Moskalenko – was very short, but all three of his "folk" movies (usually scolded by film critics) became hits at the turn of 1960s – 1970s...

Alexey Saltykov (1934–1993): *Female Empire* (1968), 49.6 million spectators; *No Return* (1974), 43.6 million viewers; *Chairman* (1965), 33.0 million viewers.

Director Alexei Saltykov started in the "thaw" of the 1960s, proved that great spectator success can bring even an anti-entertaining psychological drama about the hard life in the postwar Soviet village (*Chairman*, 1965). Unfortunately, starting from the 1970s, the artistic and spectator potential of his films began to gradually decline...

Villen Azarov (1924–1978): *The Way to "Saturn"* (1968), 48.2 million spectators; *The End of "Saturn"* (1968), 42.7 million spectators; *Fight after Victory* (1973), 35.4 million spectators.

All three spy movies by Villen Azarov were made in the style of *Strong in Spirit* (1968) by Viktor Georgiev, *Major "Vortex"* (1967) and *Adjutant of His Excellency* (1969) by Evgeny Tashkov, *Error of Resident* (1969) by Veniamin Dorman, *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973) by Tatiana Lioznova and *Variant "Omega"* (1975) by Antonis–Yanis Voyazos.

Jan Fried (1908–2003): *Lubov Yarovaya* (1953), 46.4 million viewers; *Green Coach* (1967), 30.9 million viewers; *Twelfth Night* (1955), 29.8 million viewers.

In his work, Jan Fried relied mainly on the adaptation of classical theatrical drama, and, as a rule, was not mistaken: almost every of his films became to some extent quite popular with the audience.

Alexander Stolper (1907–1979): *The Living and the Dead* (1964), 41.5 million viewers; *Story about a Real Man* (1948), 34.4 million viewers; *Difficult Happiness* (1958), 31.3 million viewers.

Screening novel by Konstantin Simonov *The Living and the Dead* was for Alexander Stolper undeniable top, as a professional skill, and audience success. *The Living and the Dead* (1964), in fact, was the first Soviet cinematographic work, which told the audience about the bitter months of military defeats of the Soviet army in 1941 ... Another successful drama of Alexander Stolper – *Story about a Real Man* (1948) – was dedicated to the feat of the Soviet military pilot...

Leonid Lukov (1909–1963): *Two Lives* (1961), 41.3 million viewers; *Believe me, people* (1965) 40.3 million viewers (co-directors – V. Berenstein, I. Gurin), *Different Fates* (1956), 30.7 million viewers.

Leonid Lukov in many of his successful films followed the path of cinema and film novel in the spirit of "socialist realism" inherent in the direction of Sergei Gerasimov, which allowed him to 1950 – 1960 years to reach a level of 30 to 41 million viewers.

Mikhail Tumanishvili (1935–2010): *Single Swim* (1986), 37.8 million viewers; *Case in a Square 36–80* (1982), 33.1 million viewers; *Reverse Move* (1981), 31.3 million viewers.

Mikhail Tumanishvili was the only Soviet director whose film hits were made exclusively in the 1980s. Of course, his military-patriotic action movies on the then modern material *Reverse Move* (1981), *The Case in a Square 36–80* (1982) and *Single Swim* (1986) was not destined to reach the record *Pirates of the XX Century* (1979), but the box office results were still impressive, which proved the demand for Soviet viewers of those years, such stories and army characters.

Herbert Rappaport (1908–1983): *Two Daytime Tickets* (1967), 35.3 million viewers; *Circle* (1973), 29.0 million viewers; *Cheryomushki* (1963), 28.8 million viewers.

Emigrant Herbert Rappaport, fleeing from the Nazis in the 1930s and working in the USSR made two detectives who were able to gather an impressive audience. Apparently, he guessed the audience's desire to see on screen exciting stories about modern detectives.

Yuri Chulyukin (1929–1987): *The Girls* (1961), 34.8 million viewers; *Let's Talk, Brother* (1979), 32.8 million viewers; *Undefeated* (1959) 31.8 million viewers.

The peak of Chulukin's popularity came at the turn of the 1950s – 1960s, when he shot two funny comedies with the popular actress Nadezhda Rumyantseva (1930–2008). It is interesting that these comedies are still the favorites of the Russian TV repertoire, while the third hit of Yuri Chulukin – an action movie on the Civil War topic *Let's talk, Brother* (1979) was "caliph for an hour"...

Vladimir Fetin (1925–1981): *Virineia* (1969), 34.6 million spectators; *Striped Trip* (1961), 32.3 million spectators; *The Don Story* (1963), 31.8 million spectators.

Vladimir Fetin has made films of different genres, each time betting on popular actors. In my opinion, the audience success of his *Don Story* (1963) and *Virineia* (1969) is largely due to Lyudmila Chursina's bright performance.

Michael Schweitzer (1920–2000): *Resurrection* (1960), 34.1 million viewers, *Golden Calf* (1969), 29.6 million viewers, *Ensign Panin* (1960), 28.9 million viewers.

Michael Schweitzer was the master of screenings of literary classics, so it is no surprise that on this very path he was waiting for success – both from film critics and the audience.

Alexander Leimanis (1913–1990): *Devil's Servants* (1970), 33.6 million viewers; *The Army of Wagtails Again in Battle* (1969), 32.2 million viewers, *Devil's Servants in the Damn Mil* (1973), 30.5 million viewers.

The only one Latvian director who was among the top thirty box office directors in the USSR, Alexander Leimanis put mainly entertainment and adventure films on historical material, which at the turn of the 1960s – 1970s steadily reached the level of 30–33 million viewers in the first year of the distribution.

Boris Volchek (1905–1974): *Accused of Murder* (1969), 33.1 million viewers; *Chekist* (1963), 32.1 million viewers; *The Commander of the Happy "Cheek"* (1972), 31.0 million viewers.

Director of photography of many films by Mikhail Romm (1901–1971), Boris Volchek began his directing career in the early 1960's and made only three films. All three of these films were included in the top 300 most box office Soviet films, although only the "ideologically correct" *Chekist* could be considered an action story.

Joseph Heifitz (1905–1995): *The Only One* (1976), 32.5 million viewers, *My Dear Man* (1958), 32.0 million viewers, *The Case of Rumyantsev* (1956), 31.8 million viewers.

Having parted in 1951 with his long-term co-director Alexander Zarkhi (1908–1997), Joseph Heifitz became a recognized master of chamber psychological dramas, telling, as a rule, about the life of ordinary people. It is this kind of film – *The Case of Rumyantsev* (1956), *My Dear Man* (1958), *The Only One* (1976) became his most box office work.

As we have noted, the first thirty most box office Soviet films of the 1930s – 1980s consists exclusively of films filmed in the Russian part of the USSR.

Among the 300 most box office Soviet films (1930s–1980s) were included:

– 28 films made at Kiev and Odessa Film Studios *:

47,4. *Emergency situation* (1959) by Victor Ivchenko

44,5. *Blue Arrow* (1959) by Leonid Estrin.

44,3. *There are only old men going into battle* (1974) by Leonid Bykov.

43,7. *They were only known to the face* (1967) by Anton Timonishin

42,0. *Away from the Homeland* (1960) by Alexey Shvachko

40,9. *Criminal Investigation Inspector* (1972) by Sulamif Tsybulnik

37,9. *The fate of Marina* (1954) by Isaac Shmaruk and Victor Ivchenko.

36,9. *Dangerous Tours* (1970) by Georgy Yungwald–Hilkevich

36,7. *Young Years* (1959) by Alexei Mishurin

36,3. *Special Purpose Squad* (1980) by Vadim Lysenko

35,8. *Aty Baty, there were soldiers* (1977) by Leonid Bykov

35,7. *Missing Persons* (1956) by Isaac Schmaruk.

35,2. *Impudence* (1972) by Georgy Yungwald–Hilkivich

35,0. *Scouts* (1969) by Alexey Shvachko

34,3. *Queen of the gas station* (1962) by Alexei Mishurin and Nikolai Litus

34,0. *Viper* (1965) by Victor Ivchenko

32,9. *Maximka* (1952) by Vladimir Brown

32,8. *Vertical* (1967) by Stanislav Govorukhin and Boris Durov

32,3. *Pedagogical Poem* (1955) by Alexei Maslyukov, Mechislava Maevsckaya

30,6. *Two years above the abyss* (1967) by Timofei Levchuk

30,5. *Story about Chekist* (1969) by Boris Durov and Stepan Puchinyan.

30,2. *Ivanna* (1959). Victor Ivchenko

30,1. *Among the good people* (1962) by Evgeny Brunchugin and Anatoly Bukovsky

30,1. *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956) by Felix Mironer and Marlen Khutsiev

30,0. *Stepsel marries Tarapunka* (1958) by Efim Berezin and Yuri Timoshenko

29,7. *Shadow by the Pier* (1955) by Mikhail Vinyarsky

29,4. *Dr. Abst's Experiment* (1969) by Anton Timonishin

29,0. *Girls' Years* (1962) by Leonid Estrin

* Here and then the sequence of data: the number of millions of viewers for the first distribution year, the title of the film, year, the director(s) (Kudryavtsev, 1998; Zemlyanukhin, Segida, 1996, etc.).

A total of 9.3 % of the 300 most box office films in the USSR, mostly in entertainment genres (detectives, military action movies, melodramas and comedies), were shot at studios in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.

– 7 films made at Belarusfilm Studios:

39,4. *My name is Arlekino* (1988) by Valery Rybarev

36,1. *White Dew* (1984) by Igor Dobrolyubov

35,4. *Girl looking for her father* (1959) by Leo Golub

34,8. *The Clock stopped at midnight* (1959) by Nikolay Figurovsky

33,9. *Love must be cherished* (1959) by Sergey Sploshnov

33,3. *Black Birch* (1977) by Vitaly Chetverikov

33,1. *Red Leaves* (1958) by Vladimir Korsh–Sablin

It is curious that while the hits made by the Kiev and Odessa studios mostly date back to the 1950s and 1970s, the most popular of the films produced by Belarusfilm Studio was the perestroika youth drama *My Name is Arlekino* (1988), which contains scenes of sex and violence typical of many Soviet films of the late 1980s and 1990s.

– 5 films produced by the Riga Film Studio:

42,9. *Double Trap* (1986) by Aloise Brench

33,6. *Devil's Servants* (1970) by Alexander Leimanis

32,2. *The Army of Wagtails Again in Battle* (1969) by Alexander Leimanis

30,5. *Devil's Servants in the Damn Mil* (1973) by Alexander Leimanis

30,1. *Light at the end of the tunnel* (1974) by Aloise Brench.

Among the hits of the Riga Film Studio there is complete entertainment unity: the list includes only detectives and adventure films.

– 3 films made at the Georgia Film Studio: 31,2. *The Mystery of the Two Oceans* (1956) by Konstantin Pipinashvili; 29,7; *The game without a draw* (1967) by Yuri Kavtaradze; 29,3; *Splinter* (1957) by Nikolai Sanishvili (1957). Again only entertainment genres: fiction, detective and comedy.

– 3 films made at the Moldova Film Studio: 33,1. *Accused of Murder* (1969) by Boris Volchek; 29,1; *Marianne* (1968) by Vasile Pascarou; 28,8; *Lullaby* (1959) by Mikhail Kalik. Here leads the criminal drama *Accused of Murder*, which for the frontier 1960 – 1970's was rather the exception to the beginning to gain momentum rules dominant entertainment genres in the audience preferences.

As for the box office hits made in other Soviet republics, firstly, none of them managed to make it to the top 300 leaders of the Soviet film distribution of more than two films, and secondly, all of them were made in the entertainment genres (magic fairy tale, detective and action): *The Adventures of Ali–Baba and 40 Robbers* (1980) by Latif Fayziev (52.8 million viewers, Uzbekfilm), 32,9; *Do not shoot in the 26th* (1967) by Ravil Batyrov (32.9 million viewers, Uzbekfilm), *The Last Relic* (1971) by Grigory Kromanov (44.9 million viewers, Tallinfil), *Extraordinary Order* (1965) by Stepan Kevorkov and Erasm Karamyan (30.8 million viewers, Armenfilm), *The End of Ataman* (1972) by Shaken Aymanov (30.6 million viewers, Kazakhfilm), *Operation "Cobra"* (1961) by Dmitry Vasilyev (35.0 million viewers, Tajikfilm).

In total, the 300 most box office films shot in the USSR in the 1930s – 1980s included 52 films of non–Russian studios (17.3 % of the total), of which about half were shot at studios in Kiev and Odessa.

With regard to the gender aspect, it turned out that the list of the 300 most box office films of Soviet cinema in the 1930s–1980s included only 12 films (4 %) made by women directors (Table 2), while the first 50 most box office films of the USSR made between the 1930s and 1980s included films made only by male directors.

Table 2. 12 films made by women directors, included in the top 300 most box office Soviet films

45,4. *Wedding with Dowry* (1953) by Tatiana Lukashevich

40,9. *Criminal Investigation Inspector* (1972) by Sulamif Tsybulnik

40,3. *Careful, Grandma* (1961) by Nadezhda Kosheverova.

39,8. *The Man from Boulevard des Capucines* (1987) by Alla Surikova.

38,4. *Men* (1982) by Iskra Babich

- 36,7. *The Tamerwoman of Tigers* (1955) by Nadezhda Kosheverova and Alexander Ivanovsky
 34,7. *Anna Karenina* (1953) by Tatiana Lukashevich
 34,4. *Evdokia* (1961) by Tatiana Lioznova
 32,0. *Be my husband* (1981) by Alla Surikova
 31,5. *Merry Stars* (1954) by Vera Stroeva
 31,3. *About those I remember and love* (1973) by Anatoly Vekhotko and Natalia Troschenko
 30,4. *Carnival* (1982) by Tatiana Lioznova

As you can see from [Table 2](#), these 12 films include mainly entertainment genres.

It turned out that only Tatyana Lukashevich (1905–1972), Nadezhda Kosheverova (1902–1989), Tatyana Lioznova (1924–2011) and Alla Surikova (born 1940) managed to make two films each, which were included in the 300 most box office films of the USSR. Although, of course, we can assume that if Tatyana Lioznova's most famous series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973) had first appeared on the big screen in a compact version, he would have had, in my opinion, all the chances to enter not only the 300, but also the 30 most box office Soviet films.

[Appendix 2](#) contains the works of another 40 Soviet directors, each of whom had two films on the list of the 300 most popular Soviet films.

[Appendix 3](#) contains a list of popular Soviet television films, each of which, in my opinion, would have been included in the list of leaders in distribution if they had been released on the big screen rather than the small screen.

5. Conclusion

So, I analyzed 300 Soviet films that had the highest number of viewers in the first year of the distribution. It turned out that entertainment genres (comedy, detective, melodrama, etc.) dominate among them. The percentage of entertainment films is the highest in the top ten (90 %), but it also prevails in the first thirty (73.3 %) and in general among the most box office three hundred Soviet films (62.0 %). At the same time, the number of popular non-entertainment films among the 300 most box office films in the USSR, which used to be quite significant in the 1960s (33 films), decreased steadily thereafter, reaching a minimum in the 1980s (8 films).

The analysis also showed that only ten Soviet directors managed to make between four and nine films that were among the 300 most box office films in the USSR. Here too, the dominance of entertainment genres is evident (75 %). In fact, only all four of Sergei Gerasimov's most popular films were made outside the entertainment film industry.

Entertainment genres dominate the work of Soviet directors, whose list of the most popular films in the USSR includes two or three films.

A similar trend in the popularity of entertainment film can be seen in the lists of the most popular films of the Soviet Union's republics: (75 % of production falls within the entertainment sphere).

With regard to the gender aspect, it turned out that the list of the 300 most box office films of Soviet cinema of the 1930s–1980s included only 12 films (4 %) made by female directors, while the first 50 most box office films of the USSR made between the 1930s and 1980s included films made only by male directors. At the same time, among the 12 most box office films produced by women directors, entertainment films (75 %) naturally dominate again.

It should be noted here that among the most popular Soviet television films, entertainment genres almost always dominate.

Thus, despite all the efforts made to introduce communist ideology and active state support for "ideologically mature" cinema, Soviet public generally followed the world's laws: entertainment films of entertainment genres (though in many cases of high professional quality) consistently came out on top of the audience preferences.

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Annexes

Annex 1. List of 300 films: leaders of Soviet distribution (1930–1991) *

1. 87,6. *Pirates of the XX century* (1979) by Boris Durov
2. 84,4. *Moscow does not believe in tears* (1979) by Vladimir Menshov
3. 76,7. *Diamond Hand* (1969) by Leonid Gaidai
4. 76,5. *Caucasian Captive* (1967) by Leonid Gaidai
5. 74,6. *Wedding in Malinovka* (1967) by Andrei Tutyshkin
6. 71,1. *Crew* (1980) by Alexander Mitta
7. 69,6. *Operation "Y" and Shurik's other adventures* (1965) by Leonid Gaidai
8. 68,3. *Shield and Sword* (1968) by Vladimir Basov
9. 66,2. *The New Adventures of the Elusive* (1969) by Edmond Keosayan
10. 66,0. *And the dawns here are quiet...* (1971) by Stanislav Rostotsky
11. 65,5. *Amphibian Man* (1961) by Vladimir Chebotarev, Gennady Kazansky.
12. 65,0. *Gentlemen of Good Luck* (1972) by Alexander Sery
13. 64,9. *Tabor goes up in the sky* (1976) by Emil Lotyanu
14. 62,5. *Kalina Red* (1974) by Vasily Shukshin
15. 62,2. *Aphonja* (1975) by Georgy Danelia
16. 60,8. *Crown of the Russian Empire* (1973) by Edmond Keosayan
17. 60,7. *Ivan Vasilyevich changes his profession* (1973) by Leonid Gaidai
18. 59,4. *Stepmother* (1973) by Oleg Bondarev
19. 58,4. *Office Romance* (1978) by Eldar Ryazanov
20. 58,0. *War and Peace* (1966) by Sergei Bondarchuk
21. 57,8. *Fate* (1978) by Evgeny Matveev.
22. 56,2. *Russian Field* (1972) by Nikolai Moskalenko
23. 56,0. *Liberation* (1970) by Yuri Ozerov
24. 55,2. *Strong in Spirit* (1968) by Victor Georgiev
25. 55,2. *Sportloto–82* (1982) by Leonid Gaidai
26. 54,9. *Woman who Sings* (1979) by Alexander Orlov
27. 54,9. *Little Vera* (1988) by Vasily Pichul
28. 54,5. *Elusive Avengers* (1967) by Edmond Keosayan
29. 54,1. *Tavern on Pyatnitskaya* (1978) by Alexander Fynzimmer
30. 53,4. *Officers* (1971) by Vladimir Rogovoy
31. 53,4. *Petrovka 38* (1980) by Boris Grigoriev
32. 52,8. *The Adventures of Ali Baba and 40 Robbers* (1980) by Latif Fayziev
33. 51,7. *Headless Rider* (1973) by Vladimir Weinstock
34. 51,2. *Trembita* (1969) by Oleg Nikolaevsky
35. 50,9. *Earthly Love* (1975) by Evgeny Matveev

36. 50,9. *No, it can't be* (1975) by Leonid Gaidai
37. 49,6. *Female Empire* (1968) by Alexey Saltykov
38. 49,6. *Dauria* (1973) by Viktor Tregubovich
39. 49,2. *Incredible adventures of Italians in Russia* (1974) by Eldar Ryazanov
40. 48,6. *Carnival Night* (1956) by Eldar Ryazanov
41. 48,6. *Hussar Ballad* (1962) by Eldar Ryazanov
42. 48,2. *The way to Saturn* (1968) by Villen Azarov
43. 47,5. *Tehran-43* (1981) by Alexander Alov and Vladimir Naumov
44. 47,4. *Emergency Situation* (1959) by Victor Ivchenko
45. 47,1. *Heritage of the Republic* (1972) by Vladimir Bychkov
46. 47,0. *Quiet Don* (1958) by Sergey Gerasimov
47. 46,8. *Simple Story* (1960) by Yuri Egorov
48. 46,4. *Lubov Yarovaya* (1953) by Jan Fried
49. 46,0. *Optimistic Tragedy* (1963) by Samson Samsonov
50. 45,7. *Above Tissa* (1958) by Dmitry Vasilyev
51. 45,4. *Wedding with Dowry* (1953) by Tatiana Lukashevich
52. 44,9. *The Last Heirloom* (1971) by Grigory Kromanov
53. 44,9. *The Most Charming and Attractive* (1985) by Herald Bejanov
54. 44,8. *Outpost in the mountains* (1953) by Konstantin Yudin
55. 44,8. *Ivan Brovkin on the virgin land* (1959) by Ivan Lukinsky
56. 44,6. *Juveniles* (1977) by Vladimir Rogovoy
57. 44,5. *Blue Arrow* (1959) by Leonid Estrin
58. 44,5. *Love and Pigeons* (1984) by Vladimir Menshov
59. 44,3. *There are only old men going into battle* (1974) by Leonid Bykov
60. 44,0. *Inter-girl* (1989) by Petr Todorovsky
61. 43,7. *They were only known to the face* (1967) by Anton Timonishin
62. 43,6. *No Return* (1974) by Alexey Saltykov
63. 43,6. *Detective* (1980) by Vladimir Fokin
64. 43,3. *Unsubstantiated* (1970) by Vladimir Krasnopolsky and Valery Uskov
65. 43,3. *A Particularly Important Task* (1981) by Evgeny Matveev
66. 43,0. *Fatherlessness* (1977) by Vladimir Shamshurin
67. 42,9. *Double Trap* (1986) by Aloise Brench
68. 42,7. *End of "Saturn"* (1968) by Villen Azarov
69. 42,5. *On Thin Ice* (1966) by Damir Vyatich-Berezhnykh
70. 42,5. *Sisters* (1957) by Grigory Roshal
71. 42,4. *Young Guard* (1948) by Sergei Gerasimov
72. 42,0. *Away from the Homeland* (1960) by Alexey Shvachko
73. 41,8. *Cold Summer of '53* (1988) by Alexander Proshkin
74. 41,6. *You for me, me for you* (1977) by Alexander Sery
75. 41,5. *The Living and the Dead* (1964) by Alexander Stolper
76. 41,3. *Two Lives* (1961) by Leonid Lukov
77. 41,3. *Clear Sky* (1961) by Grigory Chukhrai
78. 41,2. *Brave People* (1950) by Konstantin Yudin
79. 41,1. *Sannikov's Land* (1974) by Albert Mkrtychyan and Leonid Popov
80. 40,9. *Criminal Investigation Inspector* (1972) by Sulamif Tsybulnik
81. 40,6. *Kuban Cossacks* (1950) by Ivan Pyryev
82. 40,6. *They Fought for the Homeland* (1975) by Sergei Bondarchuk
83. 40,5. *Anna Karenina* (1968) by Alexander Zarkhi
84. 40,4. *Soldier Ivan Brovkin* (1955) by Ivan Lukinsky
85. 40,3. *Careful, Grandma* (1961) by Nadezhda Kosheverova
86. 40,3. *People and Beasts* (1962) by Sergey Gerasimov
87. 40,3. *Believe me, people* (1965) by Vladimir Berenstein, Ilya Gurin, Leonid Lukov
88. 39,8. *The Man from Boulevard des Capucines* (1987) by Alla Surikova
89. 39,5. *State Offender* (1965) by Nikolai Rozantsev
90. 39,4. *Thieves in Law* (1988) by Yuri Kara
91. 39,4. *My name is Harlequino* (1988) by Valery Rybarev
92. 39,3. *Twelve Chairs* (1971) by Leonid Gaidai
93. 39,3. *Boy, Busting Order* (1979) by Vladimir Rogovoy

94. 39,2. *The Fate of Man* (1959) by Sergey Bondarchuk
95. 39,2. *Armed and very dangerous* (1978) by Vladimir Vainshtok
96. 39,1. *Young People* (1973) by Nikolai Moskalenko
97. 38,9. *Ambassador of the Soviet Union* (1976) by George Natanson
98. 38,6. *Baltic Sky* (1961) by Vladimir Vengerov
99. 38,4. *The fall of Berlin* (1950) by Michael Chiaureli
100. 38,4. *Men* (1982) by Iskra Babich
101. 38,3. *The Battle on the Road* (1961) by Vladimir Basov
102. 37,9. *Tunnel* (1967) by Francisc Munteanu
103. 37,9. *Gypsy* (1967) by Evgeny Matveev
104. 37,9. *The Fate of Marina* (1954) by Isaak Shmaruk and Victor Ivchenko
105. 37,8. *Single voyage* (1986) by Mikhail Tumanishvili
106. 37,6. *Mysterious Monk* (1968) by Arkady Koltsaty
107. 37,6. *I'm sorry* (1987) by Ernest Yassan
108. 37,2. *Crane* (1969) by Nikolai Moskalenko
109. 37,0. *Tractor Drivers* (1939) by Ivan Pyryev
110. 36,9. *Dangerous Tour* (1970) by Georgy Yungwald–Hilkevich.
111. 36,7. *The Tamerwoman of Tigers* (1955) by Nadezhda Kosheverova and Alexander

Ivanovsky

112. 36,7. *Young Years* (1959) by Alexei Mishurin
113. 36,7. *One more time about love* (1968) by Georgy Natanson
114. 36,7. *Songs of the Sea* (1971) Francisc Munteanu
115. 36,5. *The Girl without Address* (1958) by Eldar Ryazanov
116. 36,5. *Romance about Lovers* (1974) by Andrei Mikhalkov–Konchalovsky
117. 36,4. *Night Patrol* (1957) by Vladimir Sukhobokov
118. 36,3. *Special Purpose Squad* (1980) by Vadim Lysenko
119. 36,2. *Light of a Distant Star* (1965) by Ivan Pyryev
120. 36,2. *What should I call you now* (1965) by Vladimir Chebotarev
121. 36,1. *White Dew* (1984) by Igor Dobrolyubov
122. 36,0. *Piggy Girl and Shepherd* (1941) by Ivan Pyryev
123. 35,9. *Cargo without marking* (1985) by Vladimir Popkov
124. 35,8. *Aty Baty, there were soldiers* (1977) by Leonid Bykov
125. 35,8. *Station for Two* (1983) by Eldar Ryazanov
126. 35,7. *Remember Your Name* (1975) by Sergei Kolosov
127. 35,7. *Missing Persons* (1956) by Isaac Shmaruk
128. 35,6. *Married Bachelor* (1983) by Vladimir Rogovoy
129. 35,6. *Women* (1966) by Pavel Lyubimov.
130. 35,4. *A girl looking for her father* (1959) by Leo Golub
131. 35,4. *Error of Resident* (1969) by Veniamin Dorman
132. 35,4. *Battle after Victory* (1973) by Villen Azarov
133. 35,4. *In the zone of special attention* (1978) by Andrey Malyukov
134. 35,4. *Young Wife* (1979) by Leonid Menaker
135. 35,3. *Two Daytime Tickets* (1967) by Herbert Rappaport
136. 35,3. *The Mystery of Blackbirds* (1984) by Vadim Derbenev
137. 35,3. *Flight 222* (1986) by Sergey Mikaelian
138. 35,2. *The Gadfly* (1955) by Alexander Feinzimmer
139. 35,2. *Impudence* (1972) by Georgy Yungwald–Hilkivich
140. 35,0. *Operation "Cobra"* (1961) by Dmitry Vasilyev
141. 35,0. *Three plus Two* (1963) by Henrikh Oganisyan
142. 35,0. *Colleagues* (1963) by Alexei Sakharov
143. 35,0. *What a Sea* (1965) by Eduard Bocharov
144. 35,0. *Scouts* (1969) by Alexey Shvachko
145. 34,9. *Native Blood* (1963) by Mikhail Ershov
146. 34,8. *The Clock stopped at midnight* (1959) by Nikolai Figurowsky
147. 34,8. *Girls* (1961) by Yuri Chulyukin
148. 34,7. *Anna Karenina* (1953) by Tatiana Lukashevich
149. 34,6. *Virineia* (1969) by Vladimir Fetin
150. 34,6. *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1972) by Alexander Ptushko

151. 34,6. *Can't say goodbye* (1982) by Boris Durov
152. 34,5. *The white desert sun* (1969) by Vladimir Motyl
153. 34,5. *Dead Season* (1969) by Savva Kulish
154. 34,4. *Story about a Real Man* (1948) by Alexander Stolper
155. 34,4. *Evdokia* (1961) by Tatiana Lioznova
156. 34,3. *Queen of the gas station* (1962) by Alexei Mishurin and Nikolai Litus
157. 34,3. *The Street is full of surprises* (1957) by Sergey Sidelev
158. 34,3. *Soldiers of Freedom* (1977) by Yuri Ozerov
159. 34,3. *Behind the Matches* (1980) by Leonid Gaidai
160. 34,2. *A Rich Bride* (1938) by Ivan Pyryev
161. 34,1. *Resurrection* (1960) by Mikhail Schweitzer
162. 34,0. *Viper* (1965) by Victor Ivchenko
163. 34,0. *Dangerous Friends* (1980) by Vladimir Shamshurin
164. 33,9. *Love must be cherished* (1959) by Sergey Sploshnov
165. 33,8. *The Tale of the Land of Siberia* (1948) by Ivan Pyryev
166. 33,8. *Prank Joke* (1977) by Vladimir Menshov
167. 33,7. *The Case of the "motley"* (1958) by Nikolai Dostal
168. 33,6. *Devil's Servants* (1970) by Alexander Leimanis
169. 33,5. *Case number 306* (1956) by Anatoly Rybakov
170. 33,5. *Soldier's Heart* (1959) by Sergei Kolosov
171. 33,4. *Ogaryova, 6* (1980) by Boris Grigoriev
172. 33,3. *Black Birch* (1977) by Vitaly Chetverikov
173. 33,3. *The Soul (1982)* by Alexander Stefanovich
174. 33,2. *The Sixth of July* (1968) by Julius Karasik
175. 33,2. *Ten Negroes* (1988) by Stanislav Govorukhin
176. 33,1. *Red Leaves* (1958) by Vladimir Korsh–Sablin
177. 33,1. *Accused of Murder* (1969) by Boris Volchek
178. 33,1. *The Story of how Tsar Peter the Arap married* (1976) by Alexander Mitta
179. 33,1. *Case in a Square 36–80* (1982) by Mikhail Tumanishvili
180. 33,0. *Eighteenth year* (1958) by Grigory Roshal
181. 33,0. *Chairman* (1965) by Alexei Saltykov
182. 32,9. *Maximka* (1952) by Vladimir Braun
183. 32,9. *Do not shoot in the 26th* (1967) by Ravil Batyrov
184. 32,9. *The Barbara of beauty is a long braid* (1972) by Alexander Rowe
185. 32,8. *Vertical* (1967) by Stanislav Govorukhin and Boris Durov
186. 32,8. *Let's Talk, Brother* (1979) by Yuri Chulyukin
187. 32,7. *Singing Teacher* (1973) Naum Birman
188. 32,7. *The Kidnapping of Savoy* (1979) by Veniamin Dorman
189. 32,6. *Republic of ShKID* (1967) by Gennady Poloka
190. 32,6. *Viy* (1967) by Konstantin Ershov, Georgy Kropachev, Alexander Ptushko
191. 32,5. *Sailor from "Comet"* (1958) by Isidore Annensky
192. 32,5. *Die Hard* (1968) by Theodore Wolfovich
193. 32,5. *The Only One* (1976) by Joseph Heifitz
194. 32,3. *Pedagogical Poem* (1955) by Alexei Maslyukov, Mechislava Maevskaya
195. 32,3. *Striped Trip* (1961) by Vladimir Fetin
196. 32,3. *The Spell of the valley of snakes* (1988) by Marek Piestrak
197. 32,2. *The Army of Wagtails Again in Battle* (1969) by Alexander Leimanis
198. 32,2. *Love a Person* (1973) by Sergey Gerasimov
199. 32,1. *Chekist* (1963) by Boris Volchek
200. 32,1. *Winter Cherry* (1985) by Igor Maslennikov
201. 32,0. *Two Captains* (1956) by Vladimir Vengerov
202. 32,0. *My Dear Man* (1958) by Joseph Heifitz
203. 32,0. *The Third Half* (1962) by Eugene Karelov
204. 32,0. *Be My Husband* (1981) by Alla Surikova
205. 31,9. *Anna around the neck* (1954) by Isidore Annensky
206. 31,9. *The Trial of Fidelity* (1954) by Ivan Pyryev
207. 31,9. *Girl with a Guitar* (1958) by Alexander Fynzimmer
208. 31,9. *Fifty–fifty* (1974) by Alexander Fynzimmer

209. 31,9. *Courier* (1987) by Karen Shakhnazarov
 210. 31,8. *The Case of Rumyantsev* (1956) by Joseph Heifitz
 211. 31,8. *Undeclared* (1959) by Yuri Chulyukin
 212. 31,8. *Serf Actress* (1963) by Roman Tikhomirov
 213. 31,8. *The Don Story* (1963) by Vladimir Fetin
 214. 31,8. *Guardian* (1970) by Albert Mkrtchyan and Edgar Khojikian
 215. 31,8. *Sweet Woman* (1977) by Vladimir Fetin
 216. 31,6. *Unforgettable 1919* (1952) by Mikhail Chiaureli
 217. 31,5. *Merry Stars* (1954) by Vera Stroeva
 218. 31,5. *You and I met somewhere* (1954) by Nikolai Dostal, Andrey Tutyshkin
 219. 31,5. *Old Robbers* (1972) by Eldar Ryazanov
 220. 31,3. *Difficult Happiness* (1958) by Alexander Stolper
 221. 31,3. *The Northern Story* (1960) by Evgeny Andrikanis
 222. 31,3. *About those I remember and love* (1973) by Anatoly Vekhotko and Natalia

Troschenko

223. 31,3. *Reverse Move* (1981) by Mikhail Tumanishvili
 224. 31,2. *Mystery of two oceans* (1956) by Konstantin Pipinashvili
 225. 31,2. *Seven brides of freight forwarder Zbruyev* (1971) by Vitaly Melnikov
 226. 31,1. *The Game without rules* (1965) by Yaropolk Lapshin
 227. 31,0. *Idiot* (1958) by Ivan Pyryev
 228. 31,0. *We'll live till Monday* (1968) by Stanislav Rostotsky
 229. 31,0. *The commander of the happy "Cheek"* (1972) by Boris Volchek
 230. 30,9. *Faithful Friends* (1954) by Mikhail Kalatozov
 231. 30,9. *Green Carriage* (1967) by Jan Fried
 231. 30,8. *Extraordinary Order* (1965) by Stepan Kevorkov and Erasm Karamyan
 232. 30,7. *Different Fates* (1956) by Leonid Lukov
 233. 30,7. *No Right to Mistake* (1975) by Alexander Fynzimmer
 234. 30,7. *In my death, I ask you to blame Klava K.* (1980) by Nikolai Lebedev and Ernest

Yasan

235. 30,6. *Good Morning.* (1955) by Andrey Frolov
 236. 30,6. *Two years above the abyss* (1967) by Timofei Levchuk
 237. 30,6. *End of Ataman* (1972) by Shaken Aymanov
 238. 30,5. *It was in Penkov* (1958) by Stanislav Rostotsky
 239. 30,5. *Story about Chekist* (1969) by Boris Durov and Stepan Puchinyan
 240. 30,5. *Five from the sky* (1970) by Vladimir Shredel
 241. 30,5. *Devil's servants in the damn mill* (1973) by Alexander Leimanis
 242. 30,4. *Carnival* (1982) by Tatiana Lioznova
 243. 30,3. *Silence* (1964) by Vladimir Basov
 244. 30,2. *Raised virgin land* (1960) by Alexander Ivanov
 245. 30,2. *Ivanna* (1959) by Victor Ivchenko
 246. 30,1. *The Ballad of a Soldier* (1959) by Grigory Chukhrai
 247. 30,1. *The Peers* (1959) by Vasily Ordynsky
 248. 30,1. *Among the good people* (1962) by Evgeny Brunchugin and Anatoly Bukovsky
 249. 30,1. *Light at the end of the tunnel* (1974) by Aloise Brench
 250. 30,1. *The secrets of Madame Wong* (1986) by Stepan Puchinyan
 251. 30,1. *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956) by Felix Mironer and Marlen Khutsiev
 252. 30,0. *Voucher into Life* (1931) by Nikolai Ekk
 253. 30,0. *Marry Guys* (1934) by Grigory Alexandrov
 254. 30,0. *Chapaev* (1934) by Vasilyev Brothers
 255. 30,0. *Girl Without a Dowry* (1936) by Jakov Protazanov
 256. 30,0. *Peter I* (1937/38) by Vladimir Petrov
 257. 30,0. *Volga–Volga* (1938) by Grigory Alexandrov
 258. 30,0. *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) by Sergey Eisenstein
 259. 30,0. *Immortal Garrison* (1956) by Zakhar Agranenko and Eduard Tisse
 260. 30,0. *Shtepsel marries Tarapunka* (1958) by Efim Berezin and Yuri Timoshenko
 261. 30,0. *Shaggy* (1966) by Edmond Keosayan
 262. 30,0. *Accelerrate* (1987) by Alexei Korenev
 263. 29,9. *Give me the Complaints Book* (1965) by Eldar Ryazanov

264. 29,8. *Black Business* (1965) by Vasily Zhuravlev
265. 29,8. *Twelfth Night* (1955) by Jan Fried
266. 29,8. *Black Arrow* (1985) by Sergey Tarasov
267. 29,7. *Shadow by the Pier* (1955) by Mikhail Vinyarsky
268. 29,7. *The Game without a draw* (1967) by Yuri Kavtaradze
269. 29,6. *Come here, Mukhtar* (1965) by Semyon Tumanov
270. 29,6. *Golden Calf* (1969) by Michael Schweitzer
271. 29,6. *European Story* (1984) by Igor Gostev
272. 29,5. *A Quarrel in Lukashi* (1959) by Maxim Ruf
273. 29,4. *The experiment of Dr. Abst* (1969) by Anton Timonishin
274. 29,4. *Don't go, girls, get married* (1985) by Evgeny Gerasimov
275. 29,3. *Unfinished Novel* (1955) by Friedrich Ermler
276. 29,3. *Splinter* (1957) by Nikolai Sanishvili
277. 29,3. *The Karamazov Brothers* (1969) by Ivan Pyryev
278. 29,2. *Dangerous Trails* (1954) by Alexander Alexeev, Evgeny Alexeev
279. 29,2. *Spare Player* (1954) by Semyon Tymoshenko
280. 29,2. *Moscow, My Love* (1974) by Alexander Mitta
281. 29,1. *Good Hour* (1956) by Victor Eysymont
282. 29,1. *Marianna* (1968) by Vasile Pascarou
283. 29,0. *Cruelty* (1959) by Nikolai Scuibin
284. 29,0. *Girl's Years* (1962) by Leonid Estrin
285. 29,0. *Beware of the Car* (1966) by Eldar Ryazanov
286. 29,0. *Circle* (1973) by Herbert Rappaport
287. 29,0. *Invincible* (1983) by Yuri Boretsky
288. 28,9. *Guilty without guilt* (1945) by Vladimir Petrov
289. 28,9. *Star* (1949/53) by Alexander Ivanov
290. 28,9. *The house I live in* (1957) by Lev Kulidzhanov
291. 28,9. *Annushka* (1959) by Boris Barnett
292. 28,9. *Ensign Panin* (1960) by Michael Schweitzer
293. 28,9. *A Man without a passport* (1966) by Anatoly Bobrovsky
294. 28,9. *The Arrows of Robin Hood* (1976) by Sergey Tarasov
295. 28,9. *Strange Woman* (1978) by Yuly Raizman
296. 28,9. *The Artist's Farewell Tour* (1980) by Alexander Fynzimmer
297. 28,9. *Come and See* (1986) by Elem Klimov
298. 28,8. *Traces in the Snow* (1955) by Adolf Bergunker
299. 28,8. *Lullaby* (1959) by Mikhail Kalik
300. 28,8. *Cheryomushki* (1963) by Herbert Rappaport

* Sequence of data in the table: place in the rating, number of millions of viewers for the first distribution year, title of the film, year, director(s) ([Kudryavtsev, 1998](#); [Zemlyanukhin, Segida, 1996](#), etc.).

Annex 2. The list of 40 Soviet directors, each of whose 300 most popular Soviet films included two films

Grigory Alexandrov (1903–1983): *Merry Guys* (1934), 30.0 million spectators; *Volga–Volga* (1938), 30.0 million spectators.

Isidor Annensky (1906–1977): *Sailor from "Comet"* (1958), 32.5 million spectators; *Anna around the neck* (1954), 31.9 million spectators.

Aloise Brench (1929–1998): *Double Trap* (1986), 42.9 million spectators; *Light at the End of the Tunnel* (1974), 30.1 million spectators.

Leonid Bykov (1928–1979): *There are only old men going into battle* (1974), 44.3 million spectators; *Aty Baty, there were soldiers* (1977), 35.8 million spectators.

Vladimir Chebotarev (1921–2010): *Amphibian Man* (1961), 65.5 million spectators (co-produced by G. Kazansky); *What should I call you now* (1965), 36.2 million spectators.

Mikhail Chiaureli (1894–1974): *The Fall of Berlin* (1950): 38.4 million spectators; *Unforgettable 1919* (1952): 31.6 million spectators.

Grigory Chukhrai (1921–2001): *Clear Sky* (1961), 41.3 million spectators; *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959), 30.1 million spectators.

Veniamin Dorman (1927–1988): *Error of Resident* (1969), 35.4 million viewers; *The Kidnapping of Savoy* (1979), 32.7 million viewers.

Nikolai Dostal (1909–1959): *The case of "motley"* (1958), 33.7 million viewers, *You and I met somewhere* (1954), 31.5 million viewers (co-director – A. Tutyshkin).

Leonid Estrin (1908–1972): *Blue Arrow* (1959), 44.5 million spectators; *Girls' Years* (1962), 29.0 million spectators.

Stanislav Govorukhin (1936–2018): *Ten Negroes* (1988), 33.2 million viewers; *Vertical* (1967), 32.8 million viewers (co-director – B. Durov). The third in this list could undoubtedly be a super-popular detective series of S. Govorukhin *The meeting place can not be changed* (1979), if it was (in compact form) filmed for film distribution.

Boris Grigoriev (1935–2012): *Petrovka, 38* (1980), 53.4 million viewers; *Ogaryova, 6* (1980), 33.4 million viewers.

Alexander Ivanov (1898–1984): *Raised virgin land* (1960) (1960), 30.2 million spectators; *Star* (1949/53), 28.9 million viewers.

Sergei Kolosov (1921–2012): *Remember Your Name* (1975), 35.7 million viewers; *Soldier's Heart* (1959), 33.5 million viewers.

Nadezhda Kosheverova (1902–1989): *Careful, Grandma* (1961), 40.3 million spectators; *Tamerwoman of Tigers* (1955), 36.7 million spectators (co-director – A. Ivanovsky).

Tatiana Lioznova (1924–2011): *Evdokia* (1961), 34.4 million spectators; *Carnival* (1982), 30.4 million spectators. The third in this list could undoubtedly be a super-popular spy series of T. Lioznova *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973), if it had been filmed (in a compact version) for film distribution.

Tatiana Lukashevich (1905–1972): *Wedding with a Dowry* (1953), 45.4 million spectators; *Anna Karenina* (1953), 34.7 million spectators.

Ivan Lukinsky (1906–1986): *Ivan Brovkin on the virgin land* (1959), 44.8 million viewers; *Soldier Ivan Brovkin* (1955), 40.4 million viewers.

Alexei Mishurin (1912–1982): *Young Years* (1959), 36.7 million viewers; *Queen of the gas station* (1962), 34.3 million viewers (co-director – N. Litus).

Albert Mkrtchyan (1926–2007): *Sannikov's Land* (1974), 41.1 million viewers (co-director – L. Popov), *Guardian* (1970), 31.8 million viewers (co-director – E. Khojikyanyan).

Georgy Natanson (1921–2017): *Ambassador of the Soviet Union* (1976), 38.9 million viewers; *Once again about love* (1968), 36.7 million viewers.

Yuri Ozerov (1921–2001): *Liberation* (1970), 56.0 million viewers; *Soldiers of Freedom* (1977), 34.3 million viewers.

Vladimir Petrov (1896–1966): *Peter I* (1937/38), 30.0 million spectators; *Guilty Without Guilt* (1945), 28.9 million spectators.

Alexander Ptushko (1900–1973): *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (1972), 34.6 million spectators; *Viy* (1967), 32.6 million spectators (co-directors: K. Ershov, G. Kropachev).

Stepan Puchinyan (1927–2018): *Story about Chekist* (1969), 30.5 million viewers (co-produced by B. Durov); *Secrets of Madame Wong* (1986), 30.1 million viewers.

Grigory Roshal (1898–1983): *Sisters* (1957), 42.5 million spectators; *Eighteenth Year* (1958), 33.0 million viewers.

Alexander Sery (1927–1987): *Gentlemen of Good Luck* (1972), 65.0 million viewers; *You for me, I for you* (1977), 41.6 million viewers.

Vladimir Shamshurin (1940–1996): *Fatherlessness* (1977), 43.0 million spectators; *Dangerous Friends* (1980) 34.0 million spectators.

Isaac Shmaruk (1910–1986): *The fate of Marina* (1954), 37.9 million spectators (co-director – V. Ivchenko); *Missing Persons* (1956), 35.7 million spectators.

Alexey Shvachko (1901–1988): *Away from the Homeland* (1960), 42.0 million spectators; *Scouts* (1969), 35.0 million spectators.

Alla Surikova (born in 1940): *The Man from Boulevard des Capucines* (1987), 39.8 million viewers; *Be my Husband* (1981), 32.0 million viewers.

Sergey Tarasov (born 1933): *Black Arrow* (1985), 29.8 million spectators; *Robin Hood's Arrows* (1976), 28.9 million spectators.

Andrei Tutyshkin (1910–1971): *Wedding in Malinovka* (1967), 74.6 million spectators; *You and I met somewhere* (1954), 31.5 million spectators (co-director – N. Dostal).

Dmitry Vasilyev (1900–1984): *Above the Tissa* (1958), 45.7 million viewers; *Operation "Cobra"* (1961), 35.0 million viewers.

Vladimir Vengerov (1920–1997): *Baltic Sky* (1961), 38.6 million spectators; *Two Captains* (1956), 32.0 million spectators.

Vladimir Weinstock (1908–1978): *Headless Raider* (1973), 51.7 million spectators; *Armed and very dangerous* (1978), 39.2 million spectators.

Ernest Yasan (1936–2018): *I'm sorry* (1987), 37.6 million viewers; *In my death, please blame Klava K.* (1980), 30.7 million viewers (co-director – N. Lebedev).

Konstantin Yudin (1896–1957): *Outpost in the Mountains* (1953), 44.8 million spectators; *Brave People* (1950), 41.2 million spectators.

Georgy Yungwald–Hilkevich (1934–2015): *Dangerous Tours* (1970), 36.9 million spectators; *Impudence* (1972), 35.2 million spectators. The third in this list could undoubtedly have been George Yungwald–Hilkevich's super-popular television musical *D'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers* (1978), if it had been filmed (in a compact version) for film distribution.

Annex 3. A list of popular Soviet television films that might have been among the leaders in distribution if they had been released (in compact form) on the big screen rather than on the small screen

12 Chairs (1976) by Mark Zakharov

Adjutant of His Excellency (1969) by Evgeny Tashkov

Big Change (1973) by Alexey Korenev.

Captain Nemo (1975) by Vasily Levin

D'Artagnan and the Three Musketeers (1978) by Georgy Yungwald–Hilkevich

Eternal Call (1973–1983) by Vladimir Krasnopolsky, Valery Uskov

Formula for Love (1984) by Marc Zakharov

Irony of Fate, or With a Light Steam! (1975) by Eldar Ryazanov

Major "Vortex" (1967) by Evgeny Tashkov

Nameless Star (1978) by Mikhail Kozakov

Ordinary Miracle (1978) by Marc Zakharov

Pokrovsky Gate (1982) by Mikhail Kozakov

Seventeen Moments of Spring (1973) by Tatiana Lioznova

Shadows disappear at noon (1971) by Vladimir Krasnopolsky, Valery Uskov

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson (1979–1986) by Igor Maslennikov

That very same Münchhausen (1979) by Marc Zakharov

The meeting place can not be changed (1979) by Stanislav Govorukhin

Walking in Flour (1977) by Vasily Ordynsky