



Access World News

## Soviets defied in film fete

The Washington Times - Friday, March 23, 1990

**Author:** James M. Dorsey, THE WASHINGTON TIMES: TWT

Jewish filmmakers vowed yesterday to hold a historic film festival in Moscow starting tomorrow despite Soviet pressure to cancel the event. "The Jewish Film Festival in Moscow has not been canceled," said Charles Zukow of Gail Brown & Associates, public relations agents for the American-Soviet Film Initiative (ASK), which is organizing the festival. "Things are going ahead according to schedule."

The filmmakers, including Washington-based Aviva Kempner, producer of "Partisans of Vilna," which aired recently on PBS, said they rejected a request by Soviet authorities to postpone the week-long festival. Miss Kempner departed for Moscow yesterday uncertain whether she would be able to show her film in tomorrow's scheduled opening.

"This festival is in real danger of being canceled because some forces in Moscow City Hall and in the Central Party Committee do not want this festival to happen," said Mr. Zukow.

Earlier this week, Soviet authorities said they would not rent three Moscow movie theaters to the festival organizers. Mr. Zukow said Deborah Kaufman and Janis Plotkin, two of the organizers of the festival, had enlisted the help of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow as well as several members of the Supreme Soviet to persuade authorities to reconsider their decision.

Mr. Zukow quoted Miss Kaufman as saying, "There is a lot of fear and certainly anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union and we believe this is the reason" for Soviet efforts to delay, if not cancel, the festival.

The festival, an offshoot of the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival, is intended to show the Soviet Union's 2 million Jews the diversity of the Jewish world and its vitality, according to the organizers. It is the first major Jewish cultural event in 50 years to be scheduled in the Soviet Union.

A press release by Brown Abrams Public Relations, which is promoting the festival of 29 films, said, "Many of the award-winning films stretch the limits of Glasnost because of their controversial content." One film, Partisans of Vilna, reveals little known facts on the Holocaust and Jewish resistance. Another film, Red Kiss, deals with disillusionment by Communist Party members when they become aware of Soviet prisons.

Still another film, Kaddish, explores American Jewish activism on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

Vladimir Plashansky, director of Moscow Film Distribution, has claimed the film festival was canceled because of a lack of funds. But Mr. Zukow dismissed that as a "totally false" excuse.

"Soviet American Film Initiative, which is the Russian sponsor of this festival, is fully capable of handling all the finances," Mr. Zukow said, referring to statements to that effect by the Initiative's president, Rustam Ibragimbekov.

He said Mr. Ibragimbekov had asked Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to intervene, warning him that cancellation of the festival would have an "extremely negative effect the world over."

Soviet authorities are reportedly reluctant to allow the festival to open out of fear of protests by right-wing Russian nationalists of the organization Pamyat, which blames Jews for the Soviet Union's problems.

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Access World News

**FILM NEWS & NOTES - FESTIVAL'S FOCUS IS ON SOVIETS****Daily News of Los Angeles (CA) - Friday, January 18, 1991****Author:** *Yardena Arar*

The Russians are coming - and they're bringing a bunch of movies with them.

Starting Saturday and continuing through Thursday, "Writer-to-Writer: American Soviet Screenwriters Festival" offers local filmgoers the opportunity to meet 10 top Soviet screenwriters at screenings of their works.

The screenwriters and some of their U.S. counterparts also will participate in panel discussions dealing with the creative process, the global film market and censorship.

The festival, organized by the Writers Guild Foundations of the East and West Coast branches of the Writers Guild of America (WGA), is the second half of an exchange conceived by the Independent Union of Soviet Screenwriters shortly after its formation three years ago, festival director Linda Elstad said.

The first part of the exchange took place last May, when U.S. screenwriters Julius Epstein, William Goldman, Lawrence Kasdan, Ernest Lehman, Anna Hamilton-Phelan, Frank Pierson, Paul Schrader, John Patrick Shanley and Roger Simon (the 10th, Robert Towne, had to drop out at the last minute) spent two weeks showing their films in Moscow, Leningrad and Tbilisi.

The writers were chosen from a wish list of films whose writers the Soviets said they'd most like to meet. Similarly, the 10 Soviets participating in the festival wrote the screenplays for films on a similar list put together by the American writers.

Elstad, a former WGA board member who serves on the Writers Guild Foundation board, said the American guild deliberately avoided films that already have had fairly wide exposure here, such as the Oscar-winning "Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears" and "Little Vera."

As a result, "Most of the films were either banned until perestroika or were made after perestroika," Elstad said.

Highlights include a screening of "The Story of Assya Kliachina Who Fell in Love but Never Married," a 1967 movie that was banned for two decades, released in 1989 and honored in the Soviet Union as the best Russian film of that year. "Comrade Stalin Goes to Africa," a new film by Irlkali Kvirikadze (who was chosen by the Americans for another film), will have its world premiere during the festival.

The Soviets' U.S. visit, which begins here, will last until Feb. 11, with stops in Santa Barbara; San Francisco; Washington, D.C.; and New York. In addition, half the group will travel to Seattle and Port Townsend, Wash., while the other half attends a glasnost film festival at a new arts center in Tulsa, Okla.

Tickets to the Los Angeles screenings, to be held at the Writers Guild Theater in Beverly Hills, cost \$7 (\$6 for WGA members) and can be obtained by calling (213) 858-1346. The panel discussions, to be held at the same location, are free.

Among the highlights of the festival:

Saturday: 12:45 p.m. "Incendiaries" (1989), a drama set in a corrective labor and educational institution for teen-age girls. Writer: Alla Krinitsina.

5 p.m. "Theme" (1975), about a Soviet writer who yearns to be loved by those around him but hates himself. Writer: Alexander Chervinsky.

7:15 p.m. "Kinfolk" (1982), chronicling the adventures of a woman from a small village visiting the big city for the first time. Writer: Victor Merezhko.

Sunday: 1 p.m. "Zero City" (1989), a surrealistic social satire about a man fighting the system. Writer: Alexander Borodansky.

3:30 p.m. Panel discussion: "This Shrinking World: Predicting the Next Years in the Global Film Marketplace."

5:15 p.m. "The White Sun of the Desert" (1969), about a soldier who inherits a harem from a notorious bandit during the Russian Revolution and tries to educate the women about their new rights. Writer: Rustam Ibragimbekov.

8 p.m. "Plumbum" (1987), about an 11-year-old boy who becomes an informer for the state. Writer: Alexander Mindadze.

Monday: 7 p.m. "Burn, Burn My Star" (1969), a comedy about a traveling street performer who tries to bring classic drama to the provinces during the revolution. Writer: Valery Fried.

Tuesday: 8:45 p.m. "The Sinner" (1988), about a man whose conscientiousness alienates his co-workers and gets him fired from job after job. Writer: Vladimir Semenovitch Gonick.

Wednesday: 7 p.m. "The Story of Assya Kliachina Who Fell in Love but Never Married" (1967), about a young collective-farm worker who gets pregnant but refuses to marry her lover. Writer: Yuri Klepikov.

Thursday: 7 p.m. "Comrade Stalin Goes to Africa" (1990), about an aging Jewish man chosen to impersonate an ailing Stalin. Writer: Irakly Kvirikadze.

Arnold unfit?: Arnold Schwarzenegger may be big at the box office, but some critics feel he falls short as a role model for American youth.

Schwarzenegger's year-old appointment as chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports was recently blasted by the National Coalition on Television Violence (NCTV), which termed it "a serious mistake" on the part of President Bush.

An NCTV news release said 10 of the 11 films Schwarzenegger appeared in during the '80s - from "Conan the Barbarian" to "Total Recall" - averaged 109 violent acts per hour. Even the 11th and least violent film, "Twins," contained 35 acts of "slapstick violence" per hour, NCTV said.

The organization named Schwarzenegger the most violent actor of 1987 because of his performances in "Predator" and "The Running Man."

While acknowledging his body-building prowess of the 1970s, NCTV said Schwarzenegger's penchant for screen violence made him a poor role model for youngsters, because "in real life, violence is not a great way for heroes to solve problems."

Responding earlier this year to the NCTV-led protest, Bush assistant and presidential personnel director Chase Untermeyer wrote that the president's "regard for Mr. Schwarzenegger is independent of whatever he may think of the scripts of any film in which Mr. Schwarzenegger has appeared."

The screening room: Looking for something to do with the kids this weekend? "The Neverending Story," a magical 1984 German film about a boy drawn into a fantasy storybook world, will be shown Saturday at the Directors Guild of America in Hollywood.

The "Saturday Matinee for Children and Their Families" screening is presented by the American Cinematheque in association with the Los Angeles Children's Museum. Tickets are \$5 (\$3 for Cinematheque and Children's Museum members and children under 14). For more information, call (213) 466-3456.

**Caption:** photo

photo: Alla Krinitsina Writer of "Incendiaries"

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## Film Festival - A Russian Views 'Peaks'

THE SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE - Tuesday, May 8, 1990

**Author:** *Judy Stone, Chronicle Staff Critic*

Tiny tykes with stars in their eyes kept trooping into the Kabuki last week to see the Ninja Turtles. Sunday night, it was grown-up fan time, all-American style. The big theater was sold out for the San Francisco International Film Festival's change-of-pace presentation of the two-hour "Twin Peaks" pilot, David Lynch's sardonic television shocker about murder in a small Washington town.

The audience applauded and cheered when their favorite "Twin Peaks" actors appeared on the screen, but booed when Festival director Peter Scarlet said Lynch was unable to be present. Lynch was working all weekend at the Lucasfilm studios in Marin to finish his next film, "Wild at Heart" in time for the Cannes Film Festival on May 19. Reportedly "even more violent and sexually twisted than his "Blue Velvet," it is based on the novel by Berkeley author Barry Gifford and stars Laura Dern and Nicolas Cage.

Watching "Twin Peaks" with bemused attention was Kirill Razlogov, the Soviet film critic who introduced "Blue Velvet" and "The Elephant Man" to Russian audiences. Razlogov said he would see Lynch at Cannes and ask him for permission to present the full television series in Moscow.

Razlogov - who is on the board of the Soviet-American Film Initiative (ASK) - was roguish predicting the responses of Soviet critics and the public. "If I show "Twin Peaks' to Soviet critics, I think their reaction will be that this is a very bad film with very bad taste. They'll ask "Why do you show that horrible piece of junk?' That's what I got when ASK showed "Blue Velvet' at the "Sex in American Film' program in Moscow last summer.

"And the reaction of the public will be "How wonderful!' but they won't understand the satire. The public will like "Twin Peaks' for the wrong reasons and the critics will hate it for the wrong reasons."

Incidentally, Razlogov is the man who worked day and night to help overcome the last-minute Moscow City Council threat to cancel the recent Jewish Film Festival there. Ironically, a festival invitation to Valery Saikin, then chairman of the city council, provoked the flap. Saikin, a "known anti-Semite," according to Razlogov, wasn't even aware that there would be a festival until he received the invitation that was sent to all Soviet officials, and he angrily determined to stop it.

While Razlogov hustled around contacting influential Communist party officials who might help overrule Saikin, the festival was finally saved by the intervention of Andrei Smirnov, chairman of the Filmmakers Union, and its secretary, Rustam Ibragimbekov, a deputy in the Supreme Soviet and ASK chairman.

Meanwhile, confusion still surrounds the whereabouts of the missing Russian film "The Asthenic Syndrome," about lethargy and hostility in the Soviet Union. It failed to arrive for the scheduled screening and nobody knows where it is, but the festival will reschedule it if the print ever shows up.

If that sounds mystifying, it's nothing compared to the allegorical chaos in the Italian comedy, "Red Lob" (4 and 9:30 today at the Kabuki.) Nanni Moretti, who wrote and directed the film, also stars as a Communist water polo player with amnesia. He's in deep water all right as he tries to play the game and figure out what went wrong in the Red past and present. Moretti is a perfect mirror of confusion, but he's not very funny. The best parts are the game-stopping television reruns of "D r. Zhivago."

Highly recommended: India's "Birth," the taut, moving drama of a father's investigation into the disappearance of his student son. A first feature by a director known only as Shaji, it is an exquisitely modulated work of art. The film will be shown in an extra added screening today at 4:15 p.m. at the Kabuki and 3:30 p.m. Sunday at the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley.

Sure to be of local interest: Wayne Wang's "Life Is Cheap" (3:15 and 7:45 p.m. today). It stars Wang's wife Cora Miao as a Chinese mafia moll, Victor Wong as a blind philosopher and Spencer Nakasako as a courier-cowboy in today's Hong

Kong underworld. Please note that advance ticket sales are booming with many screenings sold out through Sunday, the closing night of the festival.

**Caption:** PHOTO

Russian film critic Kirill Razlogov hopes to win permission to show ABC's "Twin Peaks" series in the Soviet Union

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## L.A. HOSTS SOVIET SCREENWRITERS

Daily News of Los Angeles (CA) - Tuesday, January 22, 1991

**Author:** Yardena Arar Daily News Staff Writer

George Kirgo, president of the Writers Guild of America West, prefaced his welcome speech to a group of visiting Soviet screenwriters with a little old-fashioned networking.

"Sherry Mann, where are you?" Kirgo said. Mann, a literary agent, rose to her feet in the back of the Four Seasons meeting room, and Kirgo continued: "Irakly (Kvirikadze) wants to meet you, and he needs a good agent."

Welcome to Hollywood, Comrade Kvirikadze - both literally and figuratively.

Kvirikadze is one of 10 prominent Soviet screenwriters participating in the Writers Guild Foundation-sponsored "Writer to Writer: American-Soviet Screenwriters Festival" that began Friday and continues through Thursday.

The festival is the second leg of an exchange with the Soviet Union's fledgling Independent Screenwriters' Guild, which last May hosted nine U.S. screenwriters during a 2-1/2-week visit to Moscow, Leningrad and Tbilisi.

During the Los Angeles festival, each Soviet writer is introducing screenings of one of his or her films. Over the weekend, several of the writers, their U.S. counterparts and other industry figures participated in a pair of symposia: One, held Saturday, dealt with "The Creative Process," and a Sunday session focused on "The Shrinking World: Predicting the Next Years in the Global Film Marketplace."

A third, scheduled for tonight, is to tackle "Censorship, Self and State."

However the subject of censorship was inevitably raised at Saturday's panel during a discussion of the constraints facing screenwriters in the two nations.

"You as Soviet writers may have had the censorship of the government; we have had . . . the censorship of the buck," said Anna Hamilton-Phelan, who wrote "Mask" and "Gorillas in the Mist."

The Soviets agreed that while glasnost and perestroika have eliminated the state censorship they once chafed under, the transition to a free-market economy has created pressures on them to write commercial scripts.

An emerging group of private producers - referred to by screenwriter Alexander Chervinsky as "those new rich people in Russia" - want films with action and/or sex: "If you want to make something interesting, it is absolutely impossible to get money," Chervinsky said.

Ironically, he added, the filmmakers who once complained the most bitterly about the state-run studios are now approaching them for funding of non-commercial films because "they are the only ones giving away money, which is not their own."

Chervinsky admitted that being creative was difficult under the old state censors, and financial rewards were much more limited (today, Soviet screenwriters who were lucky to get the equivalent of \$20,000 a script from the state-run studios can command the equivalent of \$100,000 or more from private companies).

But, he said, "We had a theory in the Soviet Union that the harder the artist's life, the better his work. So that's changed - unfortunately."

Another aspect of screenwriting that is changing is the actual form. Chervinsky said most Soviet scripts are actually written in prose, which in addition to dialogue, will include considerable material on a characters' thoughts. Many screenplays are published in book form.

"One of my scripts, written before perestroika and never produced - thank God - was written in the first person," Chervinsky said. He described a Soviet script as "not a film, but an illusion of a film."

Alexander Borodansky, whose scripts are written American-style, said he believes the old practice inevitably leads to bad films. "People say, what a wonderful script it is, and what a nasty film it turned out to be."

At Sunday's panel on the world film marketplace, Masha Zvereva, secretary-treasurer of the Soviet screenwriters' union and a vice president of the Soviet filmmaker's union, voiced concern over one offshoot of perestroika - the impact of increased accessibility to Western films in the Soviet Union.

"What has happened in the last three years in the Soviet Union is the complete capture of our market by American films," she said. "Our kids, our young people, during these three or four years, they (have become) accustomed to your films, and there is no way back."

Fighting the dominance of U.S. films was the subject of a recent meeting of European filmmakers, many of whom are advocating strict quotas or taxes or other restrictions on U.S. imports, Zvereva said.

But she opposes those approaches because she comes from a country that for so long had used coercion to achieve its goals. "It is so easy to forbid - it is difficult to be competitive," she said.

One reason Soviet youngsters are becoming so familiar with American films is the enormous black market for pirated videos. Jonas Rosenfield, president of the American Film Marketing Association, warned the Soviets that they too were threatened by what Rosenfield characterized as "the almost complete absence of intellectual property protection."

While Edward Akopov, president of the Soviet Screenwriters' Union, said new laws addressing piracy were being formulated, veteran writer Rustam Ibragimbekov was skeptical. "The laws don't work - and as a deputy of the Supreme Soviet I can tell you that officially," he said.

Ibragimbekov, whose son attends Santa Monica College, was one of the key figures in organizing the festival, which was initially proposed by members of the screenwriters' union shortly after its inception about three years ago.

"It was the first time they had such a union," said Linda Elstad, one of the festival's two directors. "In fact, they modeled it after the Writers Guild."

Elstad, a former WGA board member who now serves on the Writers Guild Foundation board, became involved through her personal friendship with Ibragimbekov, whom she had met a few years earlier at the American-Soviet Film Initiative and who brought up the exchange idea during a subsequent visit to Los Angeles.

"He was talking to me about this when he was supposed to catch his plane," Elstad recalled. "He missed the plane, had to be rerouted to New Orleans and New York, his luggage got lost, but he kept insisting that it was very important that he talk to me about this exchange, so I really felt committed to helping them."

It was Elstad who enlisted the support of Writers Guild West Foundation president Melville Shavelson, who worked out the details of the exchange with Akopov. Ultimately, the East Coast branch of the foundation became involved, and the Writers Guild - initially somewhat reluctant to commit funding to the effort - gave its support in the form of Friday night's welcoming cocktail party at the Four Seasons.

"I knew that there had been attempts do this before that had not succeeded," Elstad said. "What made it easier was that these people were independent of the central government and could do things their own way."

Ibragimbekov said the writers decided to look into an exchange because they heard the Soviet directors' union was organizing one. The directors' exchange has yet to materialize, so "we have learned three things," Ibragimbekov added.

"First, we can do what the directors can't. Second, screenwriters can do it at a fairly high level.

"And third, besides being well organized, besides being able to bring over a group of outstanding American screenwriters to the Soviet Union and bringing over a fairly strong team ourselves, the most important thing is the genuine sincerity and purity of feelings that are impossible to fake."



In fact, the exchange goes well beyond the public festival. The visiting writers are all staying at the homes of fellow writers and dining with assorted members of the filmmaking community. In between screenings and panel discussions they have been taken to studios, a shopping expedition to Century City, Disneyland and even for complimentary makeovers at the salon of Beverly Hills hairdresser Jose Eber, who learned about the event from Elstad, a client.

Individual and corporate sponsors as diverse as Ibragimbekov's own film export company (ASK), the Gene Autrey Western Heritage Museum and the Los Angeles Police Department, have contributed money, goods and services to the exchange.

After the Los Angeles visit, the writers head to Santa Barbara and San Francisco (Amtrak is providing train transportation). Then they split up, with some going on to Seattle and Port Townsend, Wash., and others heading to Tulsa, Okla., to participate in a glasnost film festival marking the opening of a local arts center.

The group rejoins in Washington, D.C. and then travels to New York for a replay of the festival. They are scheduled to return home Feb. 11.

Although some of the writers have never been to the United States before, virtually all have visited Western cities - so the material wealth of Los Angeles isn't as impressive as it would be to other Soviet visitors.

But all are obviously enjoying the VIP treatment they're getting. "He feels like the Shah of Iran or a Chinese mandarin," translator Sasha Gurman said, speaking for screenwriter Borodansky.

Ibragimbekov said he hopes the personal contacts are leading to better business relationships as well: The writers' union is speaking to agent Mann about some sort of group deal.

"We feel it's very important for the Soviet screenwriters' guild to have a literary agency that would represent our interests in the U.S.," he said. "We are not so much interested in the success of one person - it's important to open the door to all Soviet screenwriters."

**Caption:** 3 photos

photo: (1--3) Screenwriters Alexander Chervinsky, below left, who wrote the Soviet film "Theme," above, and Alexander Borodansky participated in the American-Soviet Screenwriters Festival sponsored by the Writers Guild.

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Access World News

**EARNEST FILM SHORT ON DRAMA****Miami Herald, The (FL)** - Friday, April 16, 1993**Author:** *BILL COSFORD Herald Movie Critic*

Close to Eden, one of this year's Oscar nominees for Best Foreign-Language Film, was originally titled Urga, after the strange Mongolian farming implement that figures repeatedly in the story. An urga resembles a giant snare -- it's a kind of lasso at the end of a very long, flexible stick. Mongolian farmers use the urga to corral their herds and, as the film's opening sequence suggests, their wives.

Certainly Close to Eden is a snappier title than Urga, but the change doesn't much help this movie, which is picturesque and earnest but small and slow, too. The film is about the friendship between a Russian truck driver and a Mongol shepherd who meet in Inner Mongolia and learn a bit, though not much, from one another. It is not much more arresting than that stark summary.

The film's most dramatic moments come in a dream sequence toward the conclusion, when Gombo, the shepherd, imagines Genghis Khan riding back from the past to save the Steppes from the corruptions of modern life -- namely, a television that Gombo has brought from the city. The best sequences, though, have to do with Gombo's wife's efforts to interest her husband in some form of birth control less draconian than abstinence (these Mongols live under Chinese rule, which commands a limit of two children per family; they already have three, which means that the youngest, and any to follow, will not even be allowed to attend school). So Gombo goes to town, ostensibly to buy condoms; he returns with a TV instead, in which vignette there is probably some kind of moral.

Not a big one, though. The pleasures of this narrow movie are in its factual details, its views of how the Mongols live. Close to Eden might well have been a better film as a documentary.

**MOVIE REVIEW****CLOSE TO EDEN** (unrated) \* \*

Cast: Bayaertu, Vladimir Gostukhin, Badema, Larisa Kuznetsova.

Director: Nikita Mikhalkov.

Screenwriter: Rustam Ibragimbekov.

Cinematographer: Villenn Kaluta.

Music: Eduard Artemyev.

A Miramax Films release. With English subtitles. Running time: 110 minutes. Vulgar language. Playing at: Alliance in Dade.

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Access World News

**ANTI-JEWISH SENTIMENT IN '60S RUSSIA****Philadelphia Inquirer, The (PA)** - Friday, March 1, 1996**Author:** Steven Rea, *INQUIRER MOVIE CRITIC*

A bold melodrama about one woman's profound crisis of identity, director Alexander Proshkin's *To See Paris and Die* rages with emotion and the collective pain of a nation burdened by government-sanctioned religious persecution.

Set in 1963, at a time of rampant Russian anti-Semitism, Proshkin's movie - the March feature in the ongoing Jewish Film Festival series at the Gershman Y - traces the relationship between Elena (Tatyana Vasilieva), a fading blond beauty, and her 22-year-old son, Yuri, a handsome, long-haired concert pianist (Russian pop star Dmitry Malikov). An obsessive stage mother, Elena struggles to control every aspect of Yuri's life, from his promising career to the women he beds in the big, dilapidated apartment they share with an odd assortment of roommates.

One student, Katya (Ekaterina Semyonova), seems the perfect match for Elena's son, until Katya reveals that she is Jewish. A strident anti-Semite, Elena cannot tolerate the fact that her prospective daughter-in-law is a Jew from Minsk, and she sets about to destroy the young couple's marriage plans. A series of new candidates, including a party girl who may have ties to the KGB (Oksana Arbuzovu), are introduced, but Yuri is inevitably - with dire consequences - drawn back to Katya.

*To See Paris and Die* has more going for it than the elemental struggle between a domineering matriarch and a son trying to determine his own fate. (It's a love-hate struggle with an incestuous subtext that's presented in fairly unobvious terms.) The origins of Elena's bitter anti-Jewish feelings, which she confesses in a series of stormy encounters with an artist friend, Solodov, are more complex than mere bigotry. And her motives for ensuring that Yuri will be selected to perform at a prestigious Paris concert run deeper than simple vicariousness.

Proshkin's directing style is blunt and aggressive - there are a lot of in-your-face camera shots and jumpy, hand-held angles - and the screenplay doesn't leave much to the imagination either: This is the sort of movie where a sparrow's death in a kitchen stove is equated to the extermination of the Jews at Dachau and foreshadows the film's ending. Foreshadows with a capital F.

Like so much Russian drama, there are lots of colorful characters on the periphery: Elena and Yuri share their apartment's common rooms with a boisterous busybody housemaid; with a silent, stern-faced older woman, and most significantly with Zhutovsky (Vladimir Steklov), a redheaded jockey who brings home, and loudly seduces, a never-ending succession of women.

*To See Paris and Die* belongs to Vasilieva, whose outsized performance as the deeply troubled Elena won her the Russian equivalent of an Oscar. Downing tall glasses of vodka, cocking her head in sorrow as she listens to the moody refrains of Edith Piaf on the phonograph, and forced into a series of humiliating sexual liaisons, Elena is a woman wrapped up in denial and self-loathing. It's emblematic of a nation's dark psyche, and Proshkin makes that point with two-fisted ferocity.

TO SEE PARIS AND DIE \* \* \* Produced by Rustam Ibragimbekov, Michel Litwak and Galina Verevkina, directed by Alexander Proshkin, written by Georgy Branev, photography by Boris Brozhovsky, music by Roman Ledenev, distributed by Galina Verevkina. In Russian with subtitles.

Running time: 1:50

Elena - Tatyana Vasilieva

Katya - Ekaterina Semyonova

Yuri - Dmitry Malikov

Solodov - Stanislav Lyubshin

Zhutovsky - Vladimir Steklov

Parent's guide: No MPAA rating (sexual situations, nudity, profanity)

Showing at: Jewish Film Festival at the Gershman YM & YWHA, Broad and Pine Sts., tomorrow night at 8; Sunday at 2 p.m. and Tuesday at 7 p.m. Producer Verevkina will introduce the film at tomorrow evening's screening. Information: 215-545-4400, Ext. 243.

**Caption:** PHOTO

PHOTO (1) 1. Tatyana Vasilieva plays the tormented Elena and Stanislav Lyubshin is Solodov in ``To See Paris and Die."

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Access World News

## RUSSIANS TO VISIT, SHOW FILMS

**Richmond Times-Dispatch** - Thursday, August 19, 1999

**Author:** Daniel Neman

When a dozen Russian filmmakers hit Richmond on Monday, they'll be bringing more than just a healthy curiosity about the roles played by films in American society - they'll also be bringing a couple of their films.

The 12 directors, writers and cinematographers are on a tour of this country sponsored by the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Their stated goals are to meet with American filmmakers and to learn and share technical information, new approaches to the craft and methods of distribution.

But in Richmond, one of just six cities they will be visiting, they will also be showing two of their movies to the public. The feature-length "A Man for a Young Woman," by Murad Maksud-Olgy Ibragimbekov, won the bronze prize at the 14th International Film Festival in Bogota, Colombia. It is in Russian, with English subtitles.

The 25-minute short subject, "Crossing the North Pole With Comrade Chkalov," by Maksim Geliyevich Pezhemskiy, is a comedy with a few words in Russian and no subtitles, but is essentially a silent film.

Both movies will be shown for free at 6:30 p.m. Monday at the Grace Street Theater, 934 W. Grace St.

All 12 filmmakers will be on the stage following the showings for a question-and-answer session.

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Access World News

**'East-West' a bracing look at Stalinist Russia****San Diego Union-Tribune, The (CA) - Friday, April 14, 2000****Author:** *David Elliott, MOVIE CRITIC*

The great mystery of Stalinism is not that so many millions of Soviet citizens went along -- they were hammered into it by faith and fear -- but that so many people outside the Soviet bloc continued to admire one of the most despicable of regimes, long after its crimes were known.

In "East-West," Alexei Govine (Oleg Menchikov) and his French wife Marie (Sandrine Bonnaire) are compilation figures, drawn from actual people. Unlike many fellow travelers of the Stalin era, they are dupes we can sympathize with. When the regime offers "voluntary repatriation to the motherland" after the great victory over Nazi Germany, the idealistic doctor Alexei returns to his Slavic roots, taking along his trusting wife and son Sergei.

France in 1946 was a painful place, in a hangover of collaborationist guilt and recrimination, but it was heaven next to Stalin's Russia. As soon as their boat lands in Odessa, after hearty toasts led by a KGB officer, the re-patriots are sorted into groups, most doomed for the camps, one old man who has just kissed the dock watching his son shot to death right there.

We feel the shock. Regis Wargnier's movie may be filmed in an old-hat, carve-and-fill manner, but it has a genuine sense of the Iron Curtain as something that girdled peoples' minds and curdled their spirits. For Marie, so completely French in looks, language and esprit, the shock is almost paralyzing.

Wagnier is good with the Stalinist trappings, the thugs and snoops, the vile speeches, cabbage-smelly apartments and lung-bursting military choirs. The intermix of French and Russian gives the movie a rich patina.

And he has strong leads in Menchikov, who looks like a leaner Kevin Kline, and in the spare, lovely Bonnaire (though Marie has barely aged after hard time in a camp). The story has a traditional jostle of vivid incidents, surprises, left hooks delivered by fate and resilient recoveries.

The script by four writers (two Russian, two French) is a bit surface. After they've moved to Kiev, the stunned couple fall apart, and Alexei takes up with a rather slatternly woman across the hall. This is part of his long-range scheme for Marie's and the boy's liberation, but by the time that has been made clear, it's hard for us to forget the Russian woman's agony from being used.

Marie gets something more than vaguely sexual going with a young Russian swimmer, whose skills come into dramatic use. None of the relations are explored in depth. At moments, "East-West" is like an Ayn Rand story done by the breathless (yet also stodgy) Truffaut of "The Last Metro."

Speaking of that, here comes the old Metro resistance fighter herself, Catherine Deneuve, as a touring theater star whose leftist politics do not stop her from helping to rescue Marie. Deneuve seems to be doing a blithe condensation of Yves Montand and Simone Signoret, who, after the Hungarian revolt (1956), broke ranks and attacked the Communist Party.

The film tends to belabor suspense and comes darn close to being corny. But the long freeze of the Soviet nightmare -- there was blood in that ice -- doesn't lend itself to either camp or nostalgia. "East-West" captures enough human and inhuman truth to be a valid footnote.

## DATEBOOK

"East-West"

Rated: PG-13. Opens today, Cove Theater, La Jolla.

\* \* \*

[] A Sony Pictures Classics release. Director: Regis Wargnier. Writers: Rustan Ibragimbekov, Sergei Bodrov, Louis Gardel, Regis Wargnier. Cinematographer: Laurent Dailland. Composer: Patrick Doyle. Cast: Sandrine Bonnaire, Oleg Menchikov, Catherine Deneuve, Tatiana Doguileva, Bogdan Stupka, Sergei Bodrov Jr. Running time: Two hours.

**Memo:** For information box see end of text.

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## Couple trapped by Russia's history "East-West" pits love, suspense in Soviet era

The Denver Post - Friday, April 21, 2000

**Author:** Steven Rosen Denver Post Movie Critic

No matter where you are in this world, any place at any time, it's hard not to regret not being in Paris instead.

But for the characters in the involving and surprisingly suspenseful "East-West," the regret has special significance. They were in France, having safely survived World War II, and then elected to go to Josef Stalin's USSR in 1946.

They were non-Communist Russians living in exile, with French-citizen spouses and offspring, who in the spirit of post-war hopefulness decided to return and help rebuild their shattered homeland.

But they were lured home through trickery. Stalin wanted to get these "imperialist spies" on Soviet soil to get rid of them.

A true tragedy

"East-West" is French director Regis Wargnier's elegantly photographed, ruminative follow-up to his Oscar-winning "Indochine." ("East-West" was a best foreign-language film nominee this year.) It is a fictional romantic drama based on a real tragedy, one of so many involving people who disappeared into Stalin's totalitarian state.

While more intimate than sprawling, its story nevertheless encompasses Soviet factory and tenement life, performances of the Red Army choir, championship swimming and foreign intrigue.

The movie begins with a group of French-Russian returnees aboard a ship to Odessa, singing and celebrating their newfound sense of purpose. But quickly they arrive at the ominously gray and dank port, where soldiers start to separate them. A young man runs to his father and is shot. A French woman named Marie (Sandrine Bonnaire) is taken away from her husband and interrogated. When she protests the destruction of her passport, a goonish security agent strikes her.

Warned to cooperate

Her Russian husband Alexie (Russian actor Oleg Menchikov, speaking in French and Russian) is warned to cooperate with Soviet authorities if he wants her and their young son to live. Soon, he is assigned to be a factory physician in Kiev; they are sent to a room inside a cramped apartment shared with fearful, intimidated (and sometimes drunk) residents.

"They can't force us to stay," the naive and foolishly defiant Marie tells Alexie. He knows they not only can, but can do far worse. His job becomes one of comforting and quieting her - trying to protect her from her sense of French entitlement - without letting her know the danger she's in.

At its best, "East-West" gains power from Alexie and Marie's tense, strained relationship. Unlike so many contemporary love stories, this is one where things left unsaid are far more important than what's stated. But at the same time, the pressure of protecting Marie from herself gets to Alexie and slowly causes a split.

Deneuve in a cameo

Menchikov's forlorn but keenly intelligent demeanor keeps us interested in this marriage. He looks like a young Kevin Kline, pensive and humane. The fine Bonnaire looks like a young Jessica Lange. Her Marie is desperately emotional, sometimes too steely in her resolve to listen when her husband warns her of danger.

When she attempts to smuggle a letter to a French actress (Catherine Deneuve, in a crucial cameo) touring the Soviet Union with Victor Hugo's "Marie Tudor," he tries to stop her. She responds with the raw pain of someone who suddenly believes her husband is one of "them," a pro-Soviet Russian.

It is unfortunate that Wargnier and his Russian co-writers could not keep "East-West" more tightly focused on Alexie and



Marie. But wanting to get more characters and more of the impact of Soviet repression on everyday life, they created a secondary story about a young competitive swimmer named Sacha (Serguei Bodrov Jr.).

#### Swimming out of Russia

He lives in the same building as Alexie and Marie and moves in with them when evicted from his own room upon his grandmother's death. Desperate to escape Russia, he hopes to swim out - as a member of a Soviet team. Marie becomes involved in helping him, and perhaps involved in other ways.

Tall with a deep voice that belies his youthfulness, Bodrov is an appealingly sensual presence. But Sacha's experiences are in the nature of what we expect from a movie about Stalinist repression, and "East-West" loses some of its freshness and uniqueness.

Yet it doesn't go stale. For just when you think "East-West" has played itself out, the pulse quickens, Patrick Doyle's score grows taut and muscular, Deneuve returns and the movie becomes a genuine thriller about escape.

Wargnier may have wanted to do too much with his Russian movie, which is why it occasionally sags and meanders. But it does offer a compelling look at two people trapped by history, and then does its best to free them.

#### East-West

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(Out of 4 stars)

Directed by: Regis Wargnier

Written by: Regis Wargnier, Louis Gardel, Serguei Bodrov, Rustam Ibragimbekov

Photography by: Laurent Dailland

Starring: Sandrine Bonnaire, Oleg Menchikov, Catherine Deneuve, Serguei Bodrov Jr

Running time: 2 hours, 1 minute

Rating: PG-13 for adult subject matter, violence, sexual situations, alcohol use

Distributed by: Sony Pictures Classics. In French and Russian with English subtitles

Opens: Today at the Chez Artiste Theatre

**Caption:** PHOTO: Sony /Etienne George Catherine Deneuve has a cameo role - playing a French actress - with Rene Feret in Regis Wargnier's "East-West.'

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Access World News

## Hunger for freedom rings true in 'East-West'

Chicago Sun-Times - Friday, April 28, 2000

Author: Roger Ebert

EAST-WEST

(STAR) (STAR) 1/2

Marie Sandrine Bonnaire

Alexei Oleg Menchikov

Gabrielle Catherine Deneuve

Sacha Serguei Bodrov Jr.

Sony Pictures Classics presents a film directed by Regis Wargnier. Written by Rustam Ibragimbekov, Serguei Bodrov, Louis Gardel and Wargnier. Running time: 121 minutes. Rated PG-13 (for violence and brief sensuality). Opening today at the Landmark Century and Wilmette theaters.

If the Soviet Union had made honorable use of the idealism it inspired in the West, it might have survived and been a happy place today. Marxism seduced and betrayed some of the best minds of its time. The executioner was Josef Stalin. One of his cruel tricks, after the end of World War II, was to invite Russians in exile to return to the motherland\_and then execute many of them, keeping the rest as virtual prisoners of the state.

"East-West" tells the fictional story of one couple who returned. Marie (Sandrine Bonnaire) is French; she married Alexei (Oleg Menchikov), a doctor, in Paris. He is eager to return and help in the rebuilding of Russia, and she loves him and comes along. Their disillusionment is swift and brutal. They see arriving passengers treated like criminals, sorted into groups and shipped away into a void, where many disappeared.

Alexei is spared because the state needs doctors, but the couple is lodged in a boarding house where the walls are thin and many of their neighbors seem to be, in one way or another, informers. Marie is suspect because she speaks French and therefore, given the logic of the times, could be a spy. The old woman who once owned the house also speaks French, comforts Marie, is informed on and dies\_possibly not of natural causes.

The film, directed by Regis Wargnier ("Indochine") tells its story not in stark, simple images, but with the kind of production values we associate with historical epics. The music by Patrick Doyle is big and sweeping, as if both the score and the visuals are trying to elevate a small story to the stature of, say, "Dr. Zhivago." But Marie is not Lara Zhivago. She is a materialist Parisian who isn't a good sport about sharing spartan facilities, who complains to a husband who is doing his best, who unilaterally does things that endanger them both.

Not that she is a bad woman. She has the kind of strong-willed independence that would be safe enough and effective in the West. She is simply slow or reluctant to see that such behavior in Russia is suicidal. Her husband, born and reared in Russia, preaches patience and stealth\_not techniques she is familiar with.

"East-West" shows physical deprivation, but makes it clear that its characters are starving mostly for the clear air of freedom. It shows a system that is unjust and brutal, but made barely livable because the ordinary humans who enforce it are prey to universal human feelings. Good people tend to want to do good things, no matter what their duty commands them. Both Marie and Alexei find friends in the bureaucracy, and both find romantic friends, too; Marie's is a swimmer whose ability may be the key to their freedom.

Toward the end of the film there is a set piece worthy of a vintage thriller. A famous left-wing French actress named Gabrielle (Catherine Deneuve) arrives on tour, is made aware of the plight of the couple and tries to help them. Her plan depends on an intuitive knowledge of how Soviet guards will react to foreign visitors; the payoff is suspenseful.

And yet the movie as a whole lacks the conviction of a real story. It is more like a lush morality play, too leisurely in its storytelling, too sure of its morality. I remember "The Inner Circle" (1994), by Andrei Konchalovsky, which starred Tom Hulse as Stalin's movie projectionist, a nonentity who through his job was able to see the dark side of the great man. It was told more in everyday detail and less in grand gestures. "East-West" has too large a canvas for its figures.

**Caption:** Sandrine Bonnaire and Oleg Menchikov star in the intriguing "East-West."

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