No One is Forgotten, Nothing is Forgotten: War Memory Under the Leonid Brezhnev Regime 1965-1974

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Acknowledgements

Perhaps as a testament to my naivety, when I embarked upon my journey toward writing an honors thesis, I envisioned a leisurely and idyllic trek toward my objective. Instead, I found myself on a road mired with multiple peaks and valleys. The obstacles and impediments were plentiful and my limitations were numerous. Looking back now upon the path I traveled, I realize that I could not have accomplished anything without the assistance of a choice collection of individuals.

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Additionally, I would like to thank my parents and grandparents. As former residents of the Soviet Union, they experienced the events I recount first-hand. I eagerly drew upon their expertise at every instant. I subjugated them to numerous drafts and revisions; which is not to even begin to speak of the numerous discussions and conversations. I owe more to them more than I can began to articulate. This thesis is a tribute to them.
In closing, perhaps my fondest memories of writing this thesis arise from the individuals who have participated in fashioning it. I am privileged to have been acquainted and to have worked with everyone who helped. Whatever successes I may enjoy are merely a reflection of the efforts of these individuals. The failures are mine alone however, because as everyone knows, it is hard to make lemonade with proper lemons.
Introduction

No Sea without water, no war without blood. War is good to hear about, but hard to endure. –Russian Proverb

In many facets, the current historiography of the Soviet Union remains ensconced in a Cold War paradigm. Fortunately, there has been an emerging body of scholarship which has attempted to transcend this binary emphasis on superpower relations and geopolitical considerations. With the availability of new archival material and the continuing saturation of the Cold War field, scholars have begun to broaden their purview into the very fabric of Soviet life. And undeniably, the Brezhnev epoch has benefited from this shift. However, the association of the Brezhnev period with the pejoratively connotative and incredibly loaded rhetoric of stagnation (zastoi) has successfully depressed scholastic interest into this time period and skewed the historical perspective of its observers. As a result, historians have been content to accept Gorbachev’s evaluation of the time period—as a period of stagnation.1 Recently, both Russian and American scholars began to question this antiquated interpretation of the Brezhnev period.2 And in general, there has been an earnest attempt to reevaluate the cultural and political

1 For a more comprehensive elucidation of this view, see Edwin Bacon, “Reconsidering Brezhnev” in Brezhnev Reconsidered, Palgrave Macmillan (2002). Pgs 1-4.
dynamics of this time period. One area which requires a similar degree of reevaluation is in the arena of war memory.

War memory and its appropriation for political objectives represent the primary subjects of this paper. More specifically, I focus on the mechanisms by which the projection of the Second World War evolved under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev and what implications war memory had on the political imperatives of the Soviet Union. By looking into the various mediums consecrated to the memory of the war—film, cartoons, ritual services, monuments, and speeches—I chronicle specific changes which occurred in the representation of the Great Patriotic War within the domestic sphere. Unlike previous scholars who invest considerable research into the exploration of the “war cult” and argue that there was one dominant narrative that was created by the regime, I contend that representations of the war were neither fixed nor monolithic, but quite dynamic and ever changing.\(^3\) With the progression of the Brezhnev era both the visual and public narratives dedicated to World War II changed markedly in order to reflect the historical realities of the time period. This was intentionally cultivated by the regime and its political elites.

Additionally, I explore the relationship between politics and war commemoration, noting the mutually overlapping tendency of both to serve as an impetus for their respective counterpoints. In short, the political objectives of the regime and the historical realities of the time period drove the cultural channels which were responsible for producing and disseminating imagery of the war. Political imperatives dictated the manner by which the war was commemorated. But at the same time, the collective memory of the Second World War shaped

the political objectives and influenced the reactions of political elites within the regime toward domestic and international developments. This relationship is fleshed out through an examination of specific events which the regime had to contend with such as the dissident movement, the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and emergence of Ostpolitik and Détente. Overall the relationship between war memory—both in the way it was utilized by the regime and the impact it had upon shaping the opinions of the Politiburo elite—and political agency was not fixed; instead the interplay remained both fluid and at times ambiguous.

**Remembering the Great Patriotic War**

Sitting a Moscow bus station, a man gazed bemusedly at the sky. He had noticed that the sunny day had suddenly transformed into ominous clouds. Bemoaning the inevitably rain shower, he could not help but to turn to an old lady sitting next to him and express exasperation. He was surprised by her response. Smiling, she retorted with a simple aphorism: “rain is ok. Snow is ok. Drought and hunger, all is ok; as long as there isn’t war (tol’ko ne voina).”

This brief vignette reveals much about the psychological and emotional disposition of the Russian populace throughout the 20th century. The resonance of the anti-war sentiment is thoroughly informed by a very poignant relationship with the Second World War. Even in the early twentieth-first century, the legacy of the Second World War remains “central to how Russians see themselves.” Opinion polls of the post-Soviet era have consistently shown that the

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4 The personal anecdote belongs to Professor David Foglesong, who recounted it to me during one of our initial meetings. It describes an episode which occurred to him during a research trip in the early 1990s.
Great Patriotic War (the war on the Soviet front from 1941-1945) is at the top of Russians’ list of defining historical moments, overshadowing the October Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁵ The scope of the war was unprecedented, etching itself into the cultural membrane of countless generations of Russian citizens.

The most obvious reason for this exposure derives from the absolute and far-reaching consequences of the war. There is not one town, village or family which escaped the war unscathed. One can travel across all of Russia, stopping in every town or village—no matter how remote—and encounter a plaque, or a monument, or a graveyard (the most common landmark) erected to commemorate the local “heroes” of the “Great Patriotic War.” Somewhere between 24 and 27 million people lost their lives. Further accounts suggest as many as 35 million people were displaced from the population—either through death or permanent resettlement. The Soviet population figure of 200 million at the start of the war was not reached again until 1956.⁶ Likewise, the losses in industrial capacity were massive numbering roughly 30 percent of national wealth. Infrastructure virtually collapsed. Over ninety percent of Moscow’s central heating and around half of its water and sewage systems were inoperable. Individual families suffered from an inability to secure essential goods or services. Millions starved. Farming and irrigation systems were dilapidated. Many were not restored until several years following the war. Soldiers fortunate enough to return home from the ghastly campaign were startled by what they saw. The country lay in ruin. The years of 1946-1947 brought one of the most severe famines in the history of the Soviet Union, claiming at least 1 million people—but potentially

much more. Despite the Soviet victory, the opportunities to celebrate and revel in the glories of the accomplishment proved scarce. The memory of both wartime and post-war privations continues to linger in the minds of survivors to this day.

However, the legacy of the war was not purely destructive. Domestically, it consolidated the majority of the population along newfound lines of patriotism and idealism. Internationally, it granted the Soviet Union political cache as evinced by their ability to partition Germany and to establish satellite states in Eastern Europe. But most significantly, it granted the regime an unprecedented level of domestic legitimacy. “Papa Stalin” as he was dotingly referred to by Russian children, rescued the Soviet people from the fascist menace. The Stalin regime cleverly co-opted the ethos of the war and channeled it toward political aims in a fashion resembling a cult—the cult of the Second World War.

The Cult of the Second World War in Historical Perspective

In many ways the beginning of the myth of the Second World War was sown during the actual war itself. As Lisa Kirschenbaum notes in her excellent work on the battle of Leningrad, “even before it ended, the siege became one of the war’s most widely told stories.” Both the Allied and Soviet press used Leningrad as a conduit for extolling the virtues of steadfastness and

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8 In many circles, specifically among intellectuals disenchantment was pervasive. Individuals felt that the state owed them a debt a gratitude which would manifest in the form of tangible reforms. However, this sentiment was by no means representative of the population at large.
heroism. War poets like Konstantin Simonov championed the supremacy of the Russian soldier. The state censors carefully regulated letters from the front and produced embellished reports of victory. An unprecedented surge of patriotism was unleashed upon the Soviet populace. Private Nikolia Moskvin wrote home to his parents, “I love my motherland, I will defend it to the last ounce of my strength and I will not begrudge my life for my people.” This was actively cultivated by the regime. Military service became a sacred duty as soldiers laid down their lives in defense of the “motherland.” It was very much a people’s war, as Viacheslav Kondratiev noted. “At the front you had the feeling that the fate of Russia lay in your hands alone.”

However, as the body counts rose and the lexicon of valor dissipated in the face of anguish, despair, and defeat, people searched for meaning to endow their struggle with purpose. Most nurtured hopes of a future devoid of suffering and repression. People longed for cultural and political liberalization and even entertained the possibility of civil freedoms and human rights. Alas, they were destined to be disappointed.

Buttressed by first-hand encounters with western riches and new lands, soldiers returned home brimming with optimism at the prospect of a bright future. A sense of entitlement permeated both veterans and citizens who suffered so immensely. Alarmed by the sudden expression of popular attitudes and threatened by the calls for liberalizations, Joseph Stalin turned toward repression to stifle the nascent sentiments. The Gulag was reinstated, dissidents were arrested, and the people were reintroduced to the aegis of totalitarian rule. As for the

11 Quoted in Merridale, *Ivan’s War*, pg 99
subject of the Second World War, Stalin took the necessary steps to alter its narrative. Eager to claim responsibility for the overall victory, but reluctant to share it, Joseph Stalin suppressed tales of individual sacrifice and bravery. Museums, monuments, and memorials were shuttered and destroyed. In a speech on February 1946, Stalin exhorted “his country to curtail talk about the war, to move past the ordeal and on to the tasks of economic reconstruction and the waging of the Cold War against capitalist nations.” Future plans to build a massive museum and memorial on Moscow’s Poklonnaia Gora were curbed. Victory Day went from an official state holiday to an ordinary work day. Memoirs and histories of the war were heavily censored. The movie industry marginalized the role of soldiers, women, and partisans, instead choosing to focus on wise generals who followed the counsel of Comrade Stalin. Public remembrances of the War were severely limited and veterans of the war were left to consider the war through introspection and private remembrance. The state aimed not merely to “manipulate the memory” of the war “but to obliterate it.” The Cult of the Second World War was transformed into the Cult of Stalin.

Nikita Khrushchev adopted a very different perspective of the Second World War than Stalin. Born in the small Russian village of Kalinovka—near Kursk—and often ridiculed as “country bumpkin” because of it, Khrushchev cleverly navigated his way to the head of Communist Party following the death of Joseph Stalin. His flamboyant and somewhat

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18 Kirschenbaum, *Legacy of Leningrad*, pg 116
contradictory personality coupled with his impulsive mannerisms made him an enigma in the domestic and international arena. Aside from directly precipitating one of the biggest crises of the Cold War, Khrushchev earned the ridicule of his countrymen on numerous occasions. Nonetheless under his stewardship, the Soviet Union experienced a significant thaw in the domestic, political and cultural spheres. The most momentous transition occurred in the perception of Stalin and the Second World War. In February 1956 at the 20th gathering of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), Khrushchev formally denounced Stalin and the “cult of personality,” which he cultivated. The so-called “secret speech” unleashed a torrent of allegations and stunning revelations involving Stalin’s war crimes and military blunders. For Khrushchev, it was not the military genius of Stalin but the gumption of the Soviet people which “saved the country and defeated Nazism.”

There was an earnest attempt to shift the emphasis from leader to the Party and people. A slew of memoirs and movies were produced to commemorate the great struggle of the war. Most of these movies and memoirs underscored the personal struggles of a generation which came of age under the specter of war. Stressing themes of forgotten youth, personal loss, and the transience of life, these remembrances reflected the perspectives of every single Russian who experienced the war—and every single Russian experienced the war in some capacity. The war became a vehicle for the catharsis of an entire nation. It was not until the forced abdication of Nikita Khrushchev and the installation of Leonid Brezhnev as the head of the Communist Party that the legacy of the Second World War became a prominent tool for shaping popular attitudes and investing legitimacy to the regime.

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The War Cult at its Apogee

The Second World War became a prominent tool in the metanarrative of the Brezhnev regime. “Metanarrative,” or the way by which the regime attempted to distill its central ideology to the masses, varied in accordance with the vision of the regime in power.22 Relying upon its own unique collection of myths and symbols to promote its values, the Great Patriotic war became the foundation of the Brezhnev metanarrative. In his discussion of the Brezhnev period, Gill stresses the reemergence of the “War Cult” in Soviet society. As manifested through artwork, ritual, and ceremony, the Brezhnev regime worked hard in order to rehabilitate the memory of the Second World War.23 By subsidizing multi-volume histories, countless speeches commemorating the legacy of the war, memoir productions, and memorial constructions, Brezhnev exploited the war to “rebuild the nation’s faltering sense of purpose.”24 From 1965 until 1974, which is the self-imposed scope of this paper, the Great Patriotic War transformed from a national trauma into a “sacrosanct cluster of heroic exploits that had once and for all proven the superiority of communism over capitalism.”25 The collection of symbols, most of artificial

22 Graeme Gill, Symbols, pg. 2-3.
24 Catherine Merridale, Ivan’s War, pp. 374.
construction, was imposed by the regime in order to serve the political purposes of the Brezhnev administration.

**Approach and Periodization**

Of course, the utilization of the war as a propagandistic tool was not unique to the Brezhnev period. Both of his predecessors relied upon the war in some capacity to enhance their domestic legitimacy. However, neither showed the same commitment and depth to the effort as the Brezhnev regime. Under Brezhnev, the “War Cult” reached its apogee. Because of the Soviet Union’s censorship apparatus, which relied upon both direct and indirect methods of coercion, the political elites of the regime were able to fashion an image of the war which was acceptable to the narrative of the regime. By focusing on speeches, artwork, political posters, and ritual within the Soviet Union, I use them as a lens for understanding the official version of the war that the regime attempted to export. Of course, I recognize the imperfections of this process and the sources which I am relying upon. Despite the presence of a massive censorship industry, it was impossible for the regime to regulate every facet of cultural development. Artists and directors became quite adroit at navigating the murky channels of Soviet censorship while still expressing their intended ideas.\(^{26}\) Therefore, it is important to be cognizant of the limitations of my research and the sources which I am relying upon. However, given the far-reaching nature of the sources—they extend beyond a particular industry of cultural production and almost a

decade—certain conclusions can still be reached both about the extent to which the regime influenced cultural productions and how reliably the productions themselves matched the visions of the regime. So while individual sources in a vacuum provide little insight into the internal machinations of the regime, patterns emerge when multiple sources amidst different contexts are examined. I have attempted to select the sources which best encapsulate the productions of the time period, independent of how they fit into the overall structure of my argument. In my estimation, whether in iconography, cinematography, or other mediums of expression, I attempted to pick the most pertinent of sources.

Also, on the subject of periodization, I have attempted to observe specific developments in the progression of war imagery from the inception of the Brezhnev regime to the Helsinki Conference of Détente. At times, those guidelines were deliberately expanded, specifically in the area of cinema because of the nature of the source itself. Cinema, as a medium, was much more rigid than the far more flexible political poster which could be printed with relative easy. Movie production required time. Therefore, certain movies which were presented on the cinema screen after the imposed scope are still germane because their approval and development took place prior to the date of their release.

Likewise, for the purposes of this paper, the study of the War Cult is limited to the political imperatives. This does not mean that other incentives for rehabilitating the memory of the Great Patriotic War did not exist; far from it. The social pressure among veterans—within the general populace and the politburo—was great. Collectively, veterans felt that the both the war and the actions of its heroes had started to fade from the popular conscience without ever receiving proper commemoration. On an individual level, members of the Politburo who participated in the fighting like Leonid Brezhnev felt a reverence for the war which they longed
to express. All of these subjects remain fertile grounds for historical exploration. However, the reason I have grounded my paper to the political arena is twofold. On one hand, the political developments of the time period have never fully been analyzed in conjunction with war memory. Simultaneously, the lack of archival material restricts my ability to make definitive conclusions about other facets of Soviet life. I attempt to inject whatever observations I can throughout about the role of individual people and of populace pressure but I do not make them the central point of my work.

Collective Memory

A brief mention should be made about the subject of collective memory. In many ways, the projection of the war operated in the same format as a myth. And it would be unfair to attempt to separate the state-sanctioned narrative of the war from the individualized reality which was experienced by its participants. Undoubtedly, each soldier or civilian approached the war from a unique perspective. However, this perspective was grounded upon a constructed reality no different than the one exploited by the regime. The objective was never to recreate historical truth, but to construct a new one. 27 The state contributed to the creation of this reality just as much as the soldiers who returned from the front. One reason why the regime was able to exploit the memory of the war was because the War Cult appropriated the “real and unvarnished

27 Christina Morina, *The Legacies of Stalingrad: Remembering the Eastern Front in Germany since 1945*, (Cambridge University Press 2011) pg. 16.
memory” of the veterans who fought in it. So the war cult was never a falsified or fictitious account that required debunking. More accurately, it became what Stuart Charme refers to as plot. The war cult was compatible with the real memories of the individuals who participated in it. And the reason why the changing narrative of the War Cult was so effective is because of the complex nature of warfare. As Samuel Hynes notes, war contains many and often contradictory lessons and meanings. Therefore the changes in the manner by which the war was represented were often seamlessly amalgamated into a much broader narrative that individual participants and denizens created. So while the emergence of the war cult came to be driven by a top-down promotion of the central values of the regime, the symbiotic relationship that these values enjoyed with the populace of the Soviet Union accounted for the effectiveness of the War Cult.

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28 Kirschenbaum, *The Siege of Leningrad*, pg. 10
Chapter 1 1964-1967: Building the Cult

Why do people have memories? It would be easier to die—anything to stop remembering.
–Vasily Grossman

The Cult of the Second World War can be defined simply as “an organized system of symbols and rituals driven by political imperatives.” Distilling its narrative of the war through a complex matrix of symbols, stories, myths, and legends, the regime hoped to resurrect the values which inspired the populace during the war. For the regime, there was fear that the notion of patriotism was lost upon a public increasingly more cynical about both the Party and the Communist state. In order to add further credence to its message, the regime appropriated the real and unvarnished memories of the veterans of the Second World War. Because the effectiveness of the cult depended upon its ability to reflect the broad experiences of the Soviet populace, it was necessary to rely upon the participants of the war to retell their stories. However, topics that might undermine the status of military command or of political control such as the initial disasters of the early campaign and the collaboration of some Soviet citizens with

31 Nina Tumarkin, Living and the Dead, pp. 110.
the occupying force remained strictly regulated.\textsuperscript{32} Therefore, even though veterans were encouraged to tell their stories and public commemorations were eagerly endorsed, it was important for the regime that these narratives were “sanitized, and co-opted.” And veterans themselves did not wish to relive the embarrassment of the past by focusing on such taboo topics. Most had dismissed these events entirely from their reminiscences. The appropriation of war memory proceeded with the sanction of the populace—the majority of it anyway. But its orchestration was definitely initiated by the political elites of the Politburo who hoped to capitalize upon its proliferation.

One political incentive for reviving the Cult of the Second World War arose from the need to combat the perceived disenchantment and disillusionment of the younger citizens toward the policies of the regime. During the 1950’s, Soviet citizens began to speak in “increasingly diverse voices. Passive resistance to unpopular state practices grew and cases of free thinking began to spread.” Perhaps most alarming was the spread of dissent and activism within the youthful members of the population. Influenced by the liberalizing reforms brought out by the 20\textsuperscript{th} party congress, young intellectuals sought to distance themselves from the regimes past. Protests emerged over solidarity for Hungary causing Khrushchev to conclude that the unrest among intellectuals and students endangered political control over society.\textsuperscript{33} There was a noticeable decline of militarism and jingoism. Educated young people took every opportunity to avoid military service. In 1961, the Soviet version of the ROTC was abolished at colleges, universities, and high schools (it was restored in 1965 under the Leonid Brezhnev regime).\textsuperscript{34} Unrest continued into the early 1960s with a new conservative crackdown and opposition toward

\textsuperscript{32} Catriona Kelly, \textit{Retreat from Dogmatism} in “Russian Cultural Studies” by Kelly and Shepherd, pg. 265.
\textsuperscript{33} Vladislav Zubok, \textit{A Failed Empire: Soviet Union in the Cold War}, (Harvard University Press, 2007) pp. 169-171
\textsuperscript{34} RGAINI, f. 5 op 30, d. 456, l. 66.
dissent. In an interview, Ilya Ehrenburg, one of the leading poets in Russian cultural life, commented that “the youth of the early 1960s represented the most enigmatic generation since the Revolution.” And it lacked “wings,” or the connection with the proper principles of the Soviet Union. Soviet opinion polls and data revealed that more and more of the youth identified with nihilism and remained apathetic to the central tenets of Communism.

Upon inheriting the leadership of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev and his cadre of political elites desired to combat the apathy which plagued the Soviet youth. According to Aleksander Bovin, one of the leading intellectuals and speech writers for Leonid Brezhnev, there was a belief that “a growing skepticism and nihilism” which impacted the youth “resulted from an increased emphasis on negative elements of Soviet history.” For Bovin, this represented a legitimate sickness of the regime. One avenue for overturning the pervading attitudes of the youth was a reprogramming of education concerning the Second World War. Political elites postulated that with a revival of the Second War, the regime could resurrect the values which played such a pivotal role in the Soviet victory. A renewed emphasis on the Great Patriotic War and the Soviet victory manifested through every facet of Soviet education. In a 1966 publication in Znamia, new improvements in the history curriculum were outlined from the youth level to high school. It highlighted the central role of the Second World War in the scope of Soviet history. Even ordinary people like Lela Gefter recognized that the regime “exploited the memory


of the war to militarize the youth.”\textsuperscript{39} Furthermore, the agenda extended beyond just youth education and soon touched upon the general populace more broadly.

Efforts to instill patriotism in the younger echelons of Soviet society soon expanded into a full out attempt to stimulate similar emotions at all levels of Soviet society. Soviet accounts of the war tried to revive the regime’s wartime legitimacy by “exposing Soviet citizens to the conditions in which it had emerged and to the language in which it had been framed.”\textsuperscript{40} Veterans were encouraged to tell their stories. This was done in an attempt to position these stories in an overarching narrative of unity; and to inject much needed legitimacy to the Brezhnev regime, which was in its nascent stages. The years from 1964-1967 were defined by an attempt to build up the War Cult.

**Forming the Narrative: Building the Plot and Effacing the Details**

In order to mark the Soviet Union’s fiftieth year university of existence, the Central Committee of the Communist Party published a dull and lengthy document in July of 1967. The Central Committee’s Survey (Tesisy)\textsuperscript{41} provided a comprehensive and streamlined narrative of the past fifty years since the October Revolution. The tedious survey covered the historical experience of the Soviet Union from the Revolution into collectivization, through the Great Patriotic War, and concluded with a summation of the current global situation. This document,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{39} Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead*, pp 147.
\bibitem{40} Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You Comrade Stalin*, pp 243.
\end{thebibliography}
proves invaluable for outlining the ideological and methodological commitments of the Brezhnev regime. The manner by which it treats certain historical events—through the lexicon it adopts and the events it highlights—reveals much about the perspective of the regime. Consequently, its value lies in both what it says and what it omits. The treatment of the Second World War as a subject of historical analysis is an integral component of its worth. It provides one with the most articulate projection of the way by which the Brezhnev regime imagined the war and chose to disseminate it.

The build-up to the Second World War is dealt with briefly. Its main points are that the Soviet Union has been developing in an extremely complex international situation, in conditions of perpetual danger; a danger which was increased when Adolf Hitler came to power. Aware of the immense dangers threatening it, the Soviet Union proceeded to strengthen the military might and industrial capacity of its country. In order to mitigate the danger, the Soviet Union attempted to take steps to create a system of collective security in Europe, but such efforts were foiled and the Soviet Union had no choice but to sign her non-aggression pact with Germany. Despite the pact, the Germans “unleashed the Second World War” against the Soviet Union. Such an account is undoubtedly an oversimplification of the years 1939-1941, and much of the details are obscured—especially the unpopular ones dealing with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. This introduction precedes the actual account of the war.

The Great Patriotic War is dealt with brevity. Simply put, it was “a war inflicted on the Soviet Union by German fascism and was the greatest military clash yet between socialism and the battle-ram of imperialism.” In the Great Patriotic War, the Soviet People “fought for the

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42 This is a paraphrased rendition of the survey as explicated by Alexander Werth in *Russia: Hopes and Fears*, pp. 36-37.
freedom and independence of their socialist country. German fascism “intended to exterminate millions of people, and to enslave the peoples of the Soviet Union and of numerous other countries.” Surprisingly, the survey admitted that the Soviet Union approached defeat in the initial stages of the war. Bluntly put “the enormous Nazi army, fully mobilized and intoxicated by the poison of chauvinism and racism, penetrated deep into our territory. The enemy broke through to the foothills of the Caucasus, to the Lower Volga, blockaded Leningrad, and threatened to capture Moscow. A deadly danger was suspended over our country.” From there, the survey criticizes, albeit modestly, the lack of preparation of the Soviet forces. This marks a subtle and somewhat veiled attack on Stalin. However, this criticism is short-lived as the tide quickly turns.

According to the survey, the entire Soviet people “rose like one man to defend their country, to smash their enemy, to drive him out of our country and to annihilate fascism.” As a result, the trajectory of the war changed starting with the “rout of the Germans in the Battle of Moscow”. Amazingly, the survey emphasizes the central role of the people during the struggle—especially during the tragic initial stages of the war. Directly attributing victory to the gumption of the Soviet people, the survey states “our heroic people, under the guidance of the Party, succeeded in overcoming the great difficulties of the earlier stages of the war, and succeeded in 1942-1943 at Stalingrad and Kursk” in order to consummate victory. From there, the survey recounts the conclusion of the war. By 1944, the “invaders” were finally thrown out of the Soviet Union. From there the Red Army played a “decisive role in liberating the peoples of Austria, Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia, before achieving final victory over Germany in 1945.”
Throughout the survey, the privations and military blunders are covered very vaguely. As Alexander Werth notes, the “appalling conditions in which the people in the war industries had to work are described with less varnish than almost ever before.”\textsuperscript{43} The opaque reporting is a deliberate attempt by the regime to avoid risking the legitimacy of the current regime. Likewise, for veterans of the Second World War, the details were also no longer significant—indeed one might argue that they were never important. For people who commemorated the war in both individualized and collective space, the tribulations of war provided no solace for its participants. Instead it was the patriotism and camaraderie which veterans longed to rekindle twenty-five years following the war’s conclusion. The survey attempted to capture the undercurrent of patriotism and sense of accomplishment which existed during the war. The results of the war were intended to serve as a symbol of pride for the denizens of the Soviet Union. At least, this was the dominant narrative that the regime hoped to cultivate.

Evolutions and changes within society require more than simple mandate. The regime provided a central direction for the story of the Great Patriotic War; but it was through direct interaction with the populace that narrative was reworked and framed in terms that were easily distilled to the general populace.\textsuperscript{44} The following pages will highlight the manner by which the regime orchestrated the co-option of societal values and disseminated its message to the people—often with the assistance and endorsement of the people themselves.

\textbf{Consecrating the War: Ritual, Monument and Speech}

\textsuperscript{43} Werth, Russia, pp. 40.
\textsuperscript{44} Gill, Symbols and Legitimacy in Soviet Politics, pg 1.
On May 8, 1967 N.G Yegorichev, the head of the Moscow Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, stood on a makeshift podium in front of an ensemble of political elites. Starting his speech, he began by extolling the virtues of the soldiers who participated in the Second World War. These men were “exemplars of whole-hearted courage and patriotism, fidelity to military duty, and steadfast devotion to the Communist Party. They achieved immortality.” Yegorichev stressed the idea that succeeding generations owed a debt of gratitude to the participants. From there, he turned to the subject of the day: the celebration of the opening of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier (Mogila Neizvestnova Soldata), a monument commemorating the soldiers who remained missing in action.

Designed by architects D.I. Burden, V.A. Klimov, Yu. R. Rabayev and sculptor Nikolai Tomsky, the monument honors the legacy of the soldiers whose identities could not be verified or accounted for. Initially, the remains of the unknown soldiers who participated in the Battle of Moscow were buried in a mass grave 41 kilometers away. To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the battle in December 1966, those remains were relocated to the present site of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The monument itself is massive. Imbued with hues of black granite and red coloration, the monument has a bronze sculpture and a soldier’s helmet both lying across a marble banner. In front of the monument there is a bronze star with a flame emanating from its center. This flame is perpetually lit. The torch for the eternal flame originated in Leningrad and was transported to Moscow. Six marble blocks were also unveiled to recognize the “hero-cities” of the war. The blocks were to house “sacred earth from the hero-cities,

45 Descriptions of the monument are taken from a combination of the writing of Nina Tumarkin’s, Living and the Dead, pg 125-129, and the private recollections of my grandfather who served in the 8th fleet of the Soviet navy during the war and was stationed near Murmansk in the Northwest part of Russia. He visited the memorial several times, including several years after its opening.
46 Emphasis is Nina Tumarkin, The Living and the Dead, pg 127.
drenched with the blood of the motherland’s courageous sons and daughters in the years of the Great Patriotic War.’’ A bronze inscription reads “Your name is unknown, your feat is immortal” (Imya tvoyo neizvestno, podvig tvoy bessmerten) right next to the immortal flame. Further on the granite wall adjacent to the tomb, there is a granite wall that says “1941-To those
Who have fallen for the Motherland-1945.” N.G. Yegoichev concluded his speech by stressing the central message of the regime’s war cult: “heroes do not die; they live on to serve successive generations.” This fit conveniently into the narrative of the Second World War.

With the hasty overthrow of Khrushchev, the Brezhnev regime searched for ways to mobilize loyalties and energies. The public celebration of past victories was supposed to “limit the damage caused by revelations of terror and to signal a return to the true and idealistic path.”48 By engaging the public directly through monuments, rituals, and celebrations, the regime hoped to enhance its legitimacy. Moreover, it wished to endow “increasingly disaffected, alienated, and alcohol-prone youth” with a sense of purpose.

Often the act of defining myth and memory takes shape in the form of monuments, rituals, and collective celebrations. Here, the term monument is broadly adopted to cover a wide variety of remembrances: war memorials, anniversary celebrations, museums, and public gatherings. Monuments created a shared space where the regime and populace could interact in order to formulate a unified myth of the Second World War. The sites were carefully orchestrated by the regime in a way that allowed them to control the imagery and symbolism of the war that the citizens encountered. The regime was able to engage its citizenry by encouraging

them to reflect upon the war at carefully orchestrated sites where the regime could control the imagery and symbolism of the war which the populace encountered. In recent articles focusing on Soviet memorials in Eastern Europe, Paul Stangl and Reuben Fowkes argue that the original meanings ascribed to sculptural spaces have evolved over time in response to changing domestic and foreign political contexts. The discourse surrounding monuments was ever changing and provided the regime with an opportunity to strengthen its legitimacy. Under the Brezhnev regime, there was an unprecedented amount of construction projects dedicated specifically to the consecration of the Second World War.

Upon taking the mantle of leadership, the Brezhnev led Politburo reinstituted Victory Day as a national holiday. Previously, May 9 was marked annually with meetings in schools and in the workplace. Informal gatherings of veterans and participants occurred throughout city parks and cafeterias. However, in 1965 and for the first time since the conclusion of the Second World War, Victory Day was declared a holiday complete with a full day off from work. The day suddenly became sacred. With the resurrection of Victory Day as a national holiday, all kinds of celebrations developed.

Victory Day was one of the most anticipated days of the year. Starting at 8’oclock an orchestra would commence playing. The tunes were always patriotic, evoking the nostalgic sentiments which existed during the war. War movies played on every single television channel. Children organized into youth organizations were expected to perform drills during the festivities. And then there was the parade. The parade was always a massive spectacle, consisting of meticulous planned demonstrations and lockstep marching. By the conclusion of the public

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activities, individuals brought flowers and laid them upon the graves of soldiers. When it grew dark, neighbors gathered together for a sumptuous dinner—topped off with copious amounts of vodka. However, war commemorations were just restricted to Victory Day. A tradition, whose origin is difficult to pin down, developed around marriage ceremonies. Young couples who tied their nuptials were expected to stop at their local war memorial and place wreaths on the graves. The intention of the act was to cement their bond to previous generations of Soviet citizens. This was meant “to inspire an obligation to parents and grandparents.” Likewise, the military participated in rituals centered upon remembrance and war commemoration. Soldiers were expected to make periodic journeys to local memorials and graveyards in order to place flowers on the burial grounds of their compatriots. Likewise, soldiers who fought in battalions together gathered at local centers to break bread with their brothers in arms. In order to support these rituals and to promulgate them amongst the populace, the regime built additional monuments.

Monument constructions increased considerably during the Brezhnev regime. Beginning in 1965, there was massive upswing in the amount of monuments that were produced. Starting in January in Ukraine, an Art Gallery was opened dedicated to the twenty year anniversary over the “fascist occupiers.” This was followed by several smaller openings including a celebration in Czechoslovakia in commemoration of the victory over fascism on April 23. On November 3, in Ukraine there was an unveiling of memorial sculptures dedicated to the pilots of Chernamortvska. Twenty-six busts of heroes of the Soviet Union were commissioned by Kiev’s sculpture group. Later in the year a monumental metal sculpture was hung up in the house of

50 The account of victory day comes from a private conversation between me and my father. I have attempted to translate his words without losing the underlying ethos behind them.
51 Tumarkin, *Living and the Dead*, pg 144.
52 Evidence of monument construction stems from a book documenting all Soviet cultural productions between the years of 1965-1977 (divided into two parts). It is titled Cultural Life in the Soviet Union and is housed in the Rutgers University Library. Quotes stem from the language that is used directly in the book.
Pavlov—an especially significant landmark in the Battle of Stalingrad. On May 8, the Soviet Armed Forces Museum opened in Moscow. The famous Grekov Military Art studio was commissioned to paint the panoramas. Studio artists concentrated on the experience of the Russian military across centuries of conflict. However, the overwhelming majority of the work was fixated on the Great Patriotic War. Artists illustrated the entire “officially sanctioned war
saga, from the surprise of Barbarossa to the triumph of Berlin,“\textsuperscript{53} with newspaper articles,

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{s174x183.png}
\caption{View of the Soviet Armed Forces Museum in Moscow}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{53} Tumarkin, \textit{Living and the Dead}, pg 138.
photographs, weapons, and uniforms adorning the walls. The section documenting the Second World War was broken up into nine halls. Six of the nine halls showed images following the conclusion of the battle of Stalingrad, which represented the more positive moments of the war. Instead of aiming to portray realist constructions of the war, the artists were tasked with accommodating the regime’s interpretation of the war. In accordance with the head of the studio, Tania Skorobogatova, the artists “were supposed to paint a pretend reality consisting of champions and exemplars.” “Soldiers had to look like perfect heroes,” added Nikolaii Soloriin many years later. Even monument constructions in the beginning of the Brezhnev period were organized in a way to glorify the war rather than present realistic constructions of its events.

The year of 1967 marked the apogee of monument construction in the Soviet Union. Aside from the previously mentioned Tomb of the Unknown Soldier which opened on May 8, separate monuments were constructed in Moscow and Novosibirsk on that date. On August 23 a monument to the machinists, fuel workers, and engineers who were responsible for transporting supplies to the war front was enshrined next to the Dupont Gardens. Similarly, a month later a monument encapsulating the shape of Yak-3 was put up to honor the pilots of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile in Novosibirsk a plaque was ordained commemorating the soldiers who fought and died from Siberia. Over 30,000 names are etched the bronze monument. But, the hallmark edifice of remembrance that was constructed to commemorate the war was located in the hero-city of Volgograd (Stalingrad).

Built upon Mamayev Kurgan, a hill overlooking the city of Volgograd, a memorial complex consecrated to the battle of Stalingrad opened to honor the decisive Soviet victory in the

54 Studia voennykh khudozhnikov imeni Grekova,(Moscow 1989)
Figure 3. "The Motherland Calls" located in Volgograd courtesy of Scott Palmer
Second World War in 1967. The hill served as the site for some of the bloodiest battles in the siege of Stalingrad. Over ten thousand soldiers fell on Mamaev Kurgan. The memorial was officially unveiled on October 15, 1967. However, the conceptualization and design for the project originated almost fifteen years earlier. While the exact details surrounding the specific contours of the project's construction lie outside the scope of this paper, the tale is quite compelling and the debates quite contentious. The most significant highlight of the complex remains the allegorical statue of the “Motherland.” Its full name is “The Motherland Calls” (Rodina Mat Zov’yot). The parameters of the statue include a sculpture which stands roughly 52 meters tall. Attached to the statue is a 27 meter sword. At the time of its installation in 1967, the statue formed the largest free-standing sculpture in the world. At the time of its opening, keynote speeches were orated by Brezhnev and Marshall Grechko (commander of the Soviet armed forces). Tens of thousands gathered to witness the spectacle. Newspaper stories hailed the majestic monument’s ability to “honor and preserve the heroism and bravery of the city’s defenders.” The theme of patriotism, heroism, and courage were constantly trumpeted by the keynote speakers and the Soviet newspapers, encapsulating the values which the regime had hoped to resurrect.

Iconic constructions consecrated to the memory of the war were prevalent in the early period of the Brezhnev regime. Monuments allowed authorities to control the public space dedicated to the consecration of the Second World War. Through the structure and imagery of monuments, the regime could channel the sentiments of the populace and ensure that there would

56 Peter Antill, Stalingrad 1942, (Osprey Publishing, 2007)
57 Tvortsam pobedy,” Izvestiia, October 17, 1967; V. Rostovshchikov, "Vysota 102,0,” Izvestiia, October 15, 1967. For the most complete contemporary accounts of the memorial’s opening see the coverage in Izvestiia and Pravda between October 14–18, 1967.
be direct interaction between the introspective reflections of individuals and the state-approved narrative of the war. Moreover, the implementation and orchestration of rituals surrounding the Second World War afforded the regime with an additional mechanism to engage the Soviet populace through war memory. Rituals attempted to reinforce the bond between the present generation of Soviet citizens and the heroes who overcame the fascist invaders. The hope was that such a connection increased the probability of further glory for posterity. But this was merely one of the ways by which the regime attempted to push its narrative upon the populace of the Soviet Union.

**Iconography at work: Soviet War Posters**

A central element that the Brezhnev regime used to project its narrative upon the Soviet populace was the Soviet art poster. Art, as a form of political expression, maintains a long-standing and well-established pedigree in human history. By representing “the vast array of emotions and feelings experienced in human life,” art generally reflects the societal values of the artist and the institutions which he belongs to. However, art as a cultural medium in the Soviet Union had a “well-acknowledged tradition of serving political authorities.” From the overthrow of the provisional government in 1917, the Bolsheviks relied upon the political poster in order to promulgate their message to a massive populace. The art poster became a form of visual propaganda, lying completely within the confines of the centralized government and working to

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58 Gill, Symbols and Legitimacy, Pg 9.
59 Gill, Symbols and Legitimacy, pg 9.
facilitate the dissemination its message. Posters were an exceptionally effective mechanism for transmission because they were “lucid and simple in form, striking images conveyed a clarity of message and often a pleasing artistic image, while the possibility of large print runs and the flexibility.” Vladimir Mayakovski referred to them as “the flowers of the Revolution” and noted they were “more powerful than cannon or bullet in achieving victory.”\textsuperscript{60} Initially the posters were designed on the basis of simplicity and visual representation to target an illiterate audience. By the Brezhnev period, Russian society had achieved virtually full literacy and so as a result the poster waned in effectiveness. However, this is not to say it was not useful.

The art poster, as a form of iconography, continued to be a ubiquitous component in Soviet society. Through its use of illustrations, the “plakat” presented the Soviet citizen with a clear construction of the regime’s messages.\textsuperscript{61} And much more rapidly and efficiently than the newspaper or the cinema screen. Unlike cinema production, which required meticulous planning and careful coordination, the art poster could be altered quickly in order to reflect the changing dynamics of political life. And it was easier to understand through a cursory glance than the corresponding article in \textit{Pravda}, \textit{Izvestia} or the \textit{Red Star}. Posters continued to be printed by the millions during the Brezhnev period.

The war became a common subject of political posters. Art posters once again started to depict soldiers as heroes of the motherland—an element of iconography which was curtailed significantly during the Stalin and Khrushchev tenures.\textsuperscript{62} The regime balanced two themes in the course of its poster production: a reminder of glorious victory in the War and of the enormous

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Vladimir Mayakovsky quoted in Stephen White’s “The Art of the Political Poster” in \textit{Russian Cultural Studies}, pg. 154.
\item Graeme Gill, \textit{Symbols}, pg 200.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
price the aforementioned victory cost. While both values crystallized in the projection of the War Cult, the individual emphasis placed upon them varied in accordance with the political developments of the time period.

The years from 1965-1967 centered upon a stronger accentuation of the theme of victory in the Great Patriotic War. Political posters, while remaining cognizant of the enormity of the struggle, bestowed much more attention to the glorification of the war than the staggering losses which it produced.

The poster labeled *Figure 4* on the following page attempted to promote work ethic by grounding it into the historical experience of World War 2. In the background there are two images which serve as a chronological basis for expressing the message of the poster. The smaller image in the left corner of the picture reveals a youthful soldier and the Russian battle-cry from 1944: “we will make it to Berlin” (doidem da Berlina). This image is juxtaposed with a following image of the solder in 1945 with the caption “we made it [to Berlin]” (doshli). In the foreground, an older male stands with his hand across his chest. The artist presents his audience with a linear connection between the solider in 1944, the soldier in 1945, and the retired soldier in 1965. At the bottom the main caption reads, “in hard-work we achieve victory.” The expectation of victory in 1944 and its subsequent accomplishment is relegated to the present and near future in 1965. The artist suggests that similar levels of achievement are feasible in the present so long as one is willing to invest himself into the cause—just like during the Great Patriotic War. In its style, the image focuses less on the obstacles and impediments which
occupied the soldier but on the overarching objectives of the war. It is very much a glorification of the Great Patriotic War. The soldier appears to be care-free and without concern. Gone are the Khrushchev renditions of the innocent youth caught in a world turned up-side down. In the middle of the image, the words appear “slava Ruskamo naradu.” Translated, this means glory to the Russian people. This poster aims to galvanize the populace by cultivating similar themes of patriotism and unity which were present during the heroic triumphs of the Great Patriotic War.

In 1966, the glorification of the war through imagery continued. Similar themes of heroism of the war and inheriting the legacy of the Soviet state were prominent. The image labeled Figure 5, shows a new, muscular Russian man taking the baton—on which the hammer and sickle of the Soviet Union is displayed—from the soldier. On top of the picture, the words read “the fatherland is ready to serve.” Through the representation of the two figures, the artist tries to create a sentiment of obligation, which connects the military and the citizenry. Although it is not clear whether the soldier served in the Second World War, the onus is still placed directly upon the youth to distinguish them. By exploiting the image of the soldier in such a manner, the author glorifies military service. While no explicit references are made to the Second World War, given the resurfacing of the War Cult, it can be interpreted that this was the intention of the author. Figure 6 is much more explicit in its referencing of the Second World War and its glorification. The male in the background is difficult to date but the hat he wears has a red star on it—a long standing symbol of the Red Army. The image however of the rocket is a reference to the famous Katyusha multiple rocket launchers. These quickly became a symbol of national pride as they were considered the paragon of technological supremacy. The words on the top of the image read “undefeatable and legendary.” This refers to the fighting force of the Red Army. And the image of the Kayusha is intended to buttress those claims.
Figure 5. "Fatherland is Ready to Serve" by V.P. Volikov
Figure 6. "Undefeatable and Legendary" by V.F. Rukavishnikov.
The year of 1967 reflected similar values and themes of heroism and patriotism in conjunction with image of the Second World War.

The first image on the page below labeled *Figure 7* targets the youth generation. Its command rings sternly: “revolutionary, keep step.” Far more significant than the actual words which are used on the page are the images which are shown. In the background individuals are presented—one would have to assume of comparable age—who all have played a catalytic role in fashioning the Soviet Union into the country it is today. The most distant image is the Red Army soldier who participated in the Civil War in order to solidify Bolshevik power. Subsequently, the next image reveals a worker, who participated in the collectivization and industrialization campaigns of the late 1920s and the early 1930s. He was responsible for transforming the Soviet Union from a rural-based agrarian economy into an industrial colossus. The third image shows the World War 2 soldier, who remained steadfast in the face of Nazi aggression. By presenting the images in chronological order, the artist dispenses meaning by binding the present into a historical tradition of purpose—the story of the Revolution. A sense of obligation is placed upon the present teenagers of the Soviet Union. While the Second World War is not the focal point of the image, its inclusion nonetheless contributes to the message of the poster. Likewise *Figure 8* underlies a central message in the narrative of the regime. The young kid salutes the soldiers in the background, who judging by their attire are partisan forces during the Second World War. Partisan troops were renowned for their key qualities of courage and self sacrifice. At the bottom, the words read “be deserving.” The message is intended to create a sense of duty between the present generation and the past. By virtue of its message, the poster glorifies the Second World War because it presents its
Figure 7. "Revolutionary Keep Step" by I.T. Ovasapov courtesy of Russianposter.ru
Figure 8. "Be Deserving" by V.B. Koretski courtesy of russianposter.ru
participants in a light which merits emulation. So the youth are mobilized behind a familiar message: duty, heroism, patriotism, and self-sacrifice.

Even though literacy rates increased significantly following the conclusion of the Second World War the political poster still had a role to play in Soviet society. Because the regime could mass produce and distribute a prodigious volume of posters quickly, a large collection of individuals were exposed to them. The added flexibility that the political poster provided made it superior in some facets than the monument or the too be discussed cinema production since it could be altered on an almost daily basis. Therefore, it also allows the historical observer to discern the message the regime intended to convey at the exact moment the poster was produced.

Digitizing the War: On the Kinofront

Cinema, as an area of historical study, is both a recent and an invaluable tool for historical analysis. With the progression of the 20th century, film developed into the most influential of popular arts. And its central role in Soviet society cannot be understated. Citizens in the Soviet Union displayed a predilection for films of action, adventure, romance, melodrama, and comedy genres. Still the most popular and subsequently most influential element of the Soviet “Kino-front” was the war film. A considerable degree of scholastic attention has been

63 There was a radical upsurge in literacy following the war as a direct product of the imposed system of compulsory education upon youth children and of World War II veterans who went into the educational system. For more see Lovell, Shadow of War, pg. 118-122.
dedicated to the exploration of war films and their prominence in Soviet society. Over the past two decades, academics have written extensively about the role of war cinema in Soviet society. As such, films became an important tool although somewhat imperfect tool for projecting the official narratives of the regime. The conflicting agendas of film directors, party secretaries, and critics often took center stage in incredibly moments of tension. Sometimes the final product did not always align accordingly with the intentions of the regime; and often those intentions were neither monolithic nor stagnant. However, there was certainly an orchestrated model that was established and promoted from the state which as Russian scholar Aleksandr Kamshlov argues played an integral role in inculcating patriotism in the late Soviet period. By inspiring the audiences with feats of heroism and bravery, the war took center stage.

During the early years of the Brezhnev period, there was a resurgence of state control within the film industry. To members within the party who had witnessed the ascension of the Khrushchev war film—a film predicated on humanity and human ethos—the envelope had been pushed too far in its critical examination of the military and the Soviet leadership. This was a shift a significant amount of individuals—not all as the Politburo was home to extensive debates and discordant opinions—hoped to rectify. Leonid Brezhnev himself preferred straightforward representations of war; ones which he could rely on to propagate the state’s central goals. As a

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67 For a more complete perspective refer to Russian films like Grigorii Chukhrail’s *Ballad of a Soldier* (Ballada o soldate) 1959, Aleksandr Stolper’s rendition of Konstantin Simonov’s *Living and the Dead* (Zhivye i mertvye), 1963.
68 The internal dynamics of the Politburo provide for a fascinating area of historical exploration. Much of the existing historiography such as Harry Gelman’s *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente*, (Cornell University Press, 1984) are horribly dated and insufficient. Unfortunately, I cannot touch upon the subject in greater detail because I do not have sources to explore the material further.
result, film makers were faced with increasing sanctions in the beginning of the Brezhnev period. This shift was reflected by Goskino’s (the regulator agency for the Soviet cinema) rejection of several scripts intended to explore the late Stalin era.\textsuperscript{69} This was followed by the banning of numerous films about the Russian Civil War.\textsuperscript{70} The beginning years of the Brezhnev period dispensed serious latitudinal challenge for filmmakers as they struggled to adjust to the newly imposed restrictions and banning became a regular part of the moviemaker’s experience.

The politburo’s insistence on exploiting the cult of the Great Patriotic War in order to foster patriotism, heroism, and obedience, stretched naturally into cinematography. War films served as an integral component for ensconcing the legacy of the Second World War into Soviet society. As conservative critic of the Soviet Screen, Vladimir Baskakov, argued neither the war films of the 1940’s nor the Thaw Films of the 1950s had produced an emblematic war hero which could be emulated by future generations. Instead, films like \textit{The Cranes are Flying}, \textit{The House I Live In}, and \textit{Peace to Him Who Enters}, represented the “de-heroicization” of Soviet cinema.\textsuperscript{71} Cognizant of this, film industry bureaucrats tried to motivate filmmakers to create representations of the Second World War which would serve the interests of the war cult. Coinciding with the reinstatement of Victory Day as a national holiday, a slew of movies was released to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Victory Day. As a whole, these films proved an “indistinguishable lot that reflected the malaise surrounding the war film and the uncertainty over the direction that film censorship would take under Brezhnev.\textsuperscript{72} However, by 1967 the film industry had achieved lockstep with the central aims of the regime.

\textsuperscript{70} Youngblood, \textit{Russian War Films}, pp. 142.
\textsuperscript{72} Youngblood, \textit{Russian War Films}, pp.145.
The year of 1967 was dominated by grandiose productions focusing on the heroic nature of the war. One example is Aleksandr Stolper’s *Retribution* (Vozmedie, 1967). Retribution was a two-part sequel to *The Living and the Dead* that followed Sintsov and Erpilin, heroes of the battle of Stalingrad. The film explores their central and unifying ambition to achieve victory (pobeda) in the Second World War. Likewise, a similar film by Vladimir Basov’s *Shield and Sword* (Schit i mech, 1967) was released. Loosely based on Vladimir Kozhevnikov’s popular novel, the title refers to the NKVD’s (the Russian central intelligence agency) emblem. Featuring Stanislav Luibshin as a Soviet spy who infiltrates the SS, the film serves as an introduction to the spy genre in Soviet cinema. The main character, Alexander finds himself inside the SS headquarters in Berlin. Successfully impersonating a German officer, Alexander steals vital war secrets which result in victory for the Soviet forces in the war. *Shield and Sword* attempted to provide the Soviet public with a war hero who could represent the generation of soldiers who fought in the Second World War. The movie fit appropriately into the regime’s attempt to revive the War Cult. *Shield and Sword*’s popularity was reflected in its box office success. It led the box office in 1968: 68.3 million viewers saw part one, 66.3 million for part two, and 46.9 million for both part three and four. Still, the film that best exemplified the Brezhnev regime’s dedication to the Second World War remains *Liberation*.

No film better reflected the Brezhnev regime’s keenness to glorify the Second World War than Yuri Ozerov’s epic *Liberation* (Osvobozhdenie, 1968-1971). No expense was spared in the production of this eight-hour and five-part cinematic tribute. Its budget far surpassed any movie previously made. Advertising was commissioned almost immediately under the auspices of the state. Screened closely with the assistance of Mosfilm and the military the movie provides

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73 Quoted in Youngbloods, *Russian War Films*, pp. 146.
an excellent overview of the official interpretation of the Great Patriotic War. Everything from its tone to its massive staged battles was perfectly orchestrated for the consumption of the domestic audience.

The movie begins on April 12, 1943 after the victory of Stalingrad. The starting point was conveniently chosen to avoid addressing controversial aspects of the war like the initial defeats in Ukraine and Belorussia along with the encirclements of Stalingrad, Moscow, and Leningrad. Part 1, is titled the Flaming Arc (ognennaia duga). Stalin is introduced back to the cinema screen after a long hiatus during the Khrushchev period, as he is shown advising his generals about how to recapture Kursk. The generals sit attentively and listen. Meanwhile, the Germans attempt to recruit Soviet POWs to join the war effort against their homeland. Most refuse, well aware the ramifications of such an action are death in front of a firing squad. This provides a vehicle for underscoring the heroism which existed during the war. Also it somewhat misleadingly glances over the fact that collections of army regiments were formed on the Eastern Front and fought on the side of the Germans against the Soviet Union. Part 1 ends on July 12, 1943 as the Battle of Kursk starts.

Part two, titled *The Breakthrough* begins on July 19, 1943. As the Red Army advances on Kiev, the battle scenes are grandiose and excellently choreographed. The focus is not on the individual as in Khrushchev films but upon the Red Army more broadly. Scenes that do focus on specific people are intentionally mobilized to provide presentations of extreme bravery. One scene in particular stands out in its representation of heroism. A mortally wounded colonel cedes his card to a young captain but keeps his pistol in order to kill more Germans before he dies. The scenes also chronicle allied actions in Italy and in the Middle East. Moments of tension are revealed between Churchill and the USSR during the film’s encapsulation of the Tehran
conference in 1943. Much to the consternation of Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill continue to delay opening the Second Front, but finally an accord is reached to start the second front in the following year. The film concludes on New Year’s Day, 1944.

*Directing the Main Blow* (Napravlenie Glavnogo udara) or part three begins in Ukraine. It shows military action in Ukraine as the Soviets attempt to recapture former territories. Perhaps the most interesting depiction of the movie is the Soviet portrayal of D-day. In it, the allied assault on Normandy is trivialized. In the movie, the beaches of Normandy hardly have any traces of German resistance. The allied ascension to the beachhead occurs rapidly and without worry. One may argue that this reenactment is justified when attempting to contrast the magnitude of American and British casualties with those suffered on the Eastern front. From there, the action turns to Belorussia, where underground partisan troops repeatedly sabotage German supply lines and troop formations. Once again, the themes of heroism are espoused as relatively small numbers of Soviet troops risk their lives against tremendous odds in order to assist the war effort. Russian troops liberate Bobriusk in June and continue toward Minsk. The film ends with the Red Army crossing into Poland. The failed promise of support for a Polish uprising is not revealed at all despite the fact that it cost the senseless slaughter of thousands of Warsaw residents.

The next installment starts on January 12, 1945. The *Battle for Berlin* (Bitva za Berlin) provides an interesting glimpse into the political debate which raged between the allies. In the relatively early stages of the film, the movie turns to the Yalta Conference in February. Increasingly distrustful of American and British motivations, Stalin grows suspicious and fears

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74 Both of my grandmothers lived in Bobriusk prior to the War and were evacuated from the town in the war’s nascent stages.
the possibility of a separate peace between the United States and Germany. Little of the battle is shown during the movie, as this installment provides a step back for its audience and sets the stage for the conclusion of Liberation.

The finale of Liberation, titled the Last Storm (Poslednii shturm) is set in Berlin. The scenes are treated with the utmost attention and focus upon the contrast between the Soviet Union and Germany on the brink of defeat. Whereas throughout the movie Stalin and the generals are displayed in a state of equanimity, Adolf Hitler is irrational and despondent. Ordering the flooding of Berlin’s subway, Hitler seems oblivious to German lives. And the Germans themselves are constantly vilified. The negative representation of Germany on the cinema screen is a point which I will return to throughout the course of the paper. The final scene of the movie ends with Zhukov proclaiming that “everyone is guaranteed life” and the final credits show the death toll for the allied nations. In summation, Liberation was more spectacle than poignant remembrance. Various scenes throughout the movie are punctuated by unrealistic acts of heroism. Stoicism in the face of peril emerges as a consistent theme. And this is exactly the image the regime hoped to create for the generations of Soviet citizens who witnessed the spectacle.

In order to add further credence to the film, press promoted it energetically. Veterans of the war were quoted in newspapers and magazines endorsing its authenticity.  

For the Brezhnev regime, Liberation represented a massive campaign specifically aimed at the younger populations. Liberation was intended to be the canonical film for its generation. While the film was officially commissioned for the 25th anniversary of victory day (1970), the majority of it was

filmed and licensed during 1967. As such, the movie reflected the attitudes of the regime and leadership which were apparent in the years of 1964 to 1967.

Overall, the quality of the cinema struggled during the initial phases of the Brezhnev period. Hampered by newfound restrictions on creativity and shackled with an overly conservative amalgam of bureaucrats, Soviet directors like Stolper and Ozerov failed to produce films with deep emotional resonance like they did during the Khrushchev era. This provides evidence that although there were clashes in representation, generally the apparatus was successful in framing the projection of the war in such a way that was consistent with its values. The mechanisms of coercion were not direct like during the Stalin era. By channeling resources to favored directors, massive advertising, and “thinly veiled [acts] of coercion,”76 the political elites hoped to control the image of the Second World War on the cinema screen through favoritism and patronage. And directors, albeit somewhat begrudgingly, obliged in order to accommodate their own personal well-being. So even though the political controls of the movie industry were not absolute, the regime was relatively successful in controlling the image of the War which they wanted to present. Through direct banning and indirect incentives, the regime influenced what movies reached the cinema screen and the public at large.

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76 Youngblood, *Russian War Films*, pg 162.
Conclusion

The beginning years of the Brezhnev period differed radically from his predecessor, Khrushchev. Perhaps the most telling distinction occurred in the regime’s respective treatment of the Second World War. Under Khrushchev, directors, artists, and sculptors sought to present the war in its most complete and nuanced iteration. Under the Brezhnev guided Politburo, the projection of the war was used as a means for inspiring loyalty and curbing apathy. As such it became a vehicle of legitimacy. By circulating a collection of war images—through monuments, art posters, and movies—the regime wished to revitalize the nostalgia and patriotism of the war. 77 Hopefully, these emotions would spill over into the youth generations and provide a counterweight to the apathy and nihilism which had begun to permeate their ranks. In order to add credence to the War Cult, the regime worked with the populace to craft a narrative of the regime which would be acceptable. By allowing and encouraging veterans to tell their stories, creating public spaces of commemoration, and unifying generations around the War, the regime hoped to strengthen its authority over the people. Simultaneously, the people themselves were complicit in this narrative of the war and accepted its imposition. So while the regime gave direction to the cult with a mind toward a specific purpose, the participation of veterans was essential for its proliferation. However, this does not mean that the War Cult remained a stagnant Rather it would change quite significantly in the years to come. The year 1968 would represent a line of demarcation both for the regime and the War Cult.

77 Gill, Symbols and Legitimacy, pp 200.
In our country the lie has become not just a moral category but a pillar of the State.

--Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

A common theme in the metanarrative of the Soviet regime was the interplay between domestic developments and international obligations. This gained greater currency during the period of 1968 with the emergence of discontent and possible insurrection in the satellite state of Czechoslovakia. Under the aegis of Alexander Dubcek, liberal reforms started to take root in Czechoslovakia much to the dismay of the Brezhnev leadership. The Politburo took action, invading Prague and forcing the abdication of Dubcek while simultaneously instituting military rule. This created a degree—albeit small—of discontent within some factions of the Soviet populace. Growing increasingly disenchanted with the machinations of the regime, certain individuals began to actively challenge the regime. While this was certainly not a majority of the populace, the regime responded by fortifying along familiar and conservative lines. As a byproduct of the international situation in Czechoslovakia, the representation of the War Cult changed.

The War Cult, which was thoroughly entrenched into the metanarrative, started to reflect the differing motivations of the regime. Projections of the war continued to glorify the war and lionize its participants. However, at the same time representations of the war emerged for the first time under the Brezhnev period stressing German revanchism and encroachment. Neither of these themes were unique developments in the scope of Soviet propaganda. But until this point,
the Brezhnev regime did not rely upon negative characterizations of the German “enemy” in cultural productions—specifically of posters. Soviet propaganda attempted to channel the residual enmity which remained a visceral part of the Soviet psyche toward Germany in order to explicate the invasion of Czechoslovakia. The overwhelming number of the populace supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia under the grounds of a possible fascist presence. This fear of fascism was born by the experience of the Second World War and was relied upon by the regime in order to justify the invasion of a fellow Communist state.

Moreover, developments in Czechoslovakia and the subsequent aggression which occurred also gave rise to a new found emphasis upon peace. Ironically, Soviet aggression in Czechoslovakia paved the way for the peace in the 1970s and the war cult reflected that. Peace, as both a goal and a symbol, resonated with the populace from the inception of the Soviet state. Within the Brezhnev regime, the War Cult dedicated a considerably degree of attention to the soldiers who had lost their lives as part of the titanic struggle between Germany and the Soviet Union. However, this was done in order to grant additional “moral weight to what the authorities sought to present as the logical result of the wartime experience.”^{78} Loss in life was presented as an explanation for justifying the lionization of the war and its survivors. Peace itself was not a primary motivation that the regime aspired to so much as merely a tool for the glorification of the war itself. Its prominent presence within the metanarrative belied its significance. It was only toward the latter portion of the 1960s where peace emerged as a legitimate objective and portion of the War Cult.

This Changes Everything: Czechoslovakia and its Significance

The beginning of the Brezhnev tenure was devoid of controversial domestic or international developments. Brezhnev himself was a mild, indecisive man, who above all desired peace, quiet, tranquility, and an absence of conflict.\textsuperscript{79} This made the circumstances surrounding the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia so curious. It appeared entirely out of character and shocked the internal configuration of the Soviet Union.

At first, and one might argue always, military intervention was not the most preferred outcome for the Brezhnev regime. The leadership was reluctant to intervene for many months. Events in Czechoslovakia had slowly built toward revolutionary fervor for several years without any Soviet objection.\textsuperscript{80} By 1968, a crescendo was reached. Due to a number of internal and external factors, the domestic milieu of Czechoslovakia experienced a number of liberal changes. People began to openly air ideas of democratization and pluralism. Beginning in March and April of 1968, free discussion of the reformist program was given increasing attention in Czechoslovak politics.\textsuperscript{81} The news media began to promulgate stories of reform and criticize the draconian policies of the previous pro-Soviet regime. Particular umbrage was taken at the lack of attention toward human rights and decrepit economic conditions. The Central Committee stayed abreast of these developments via the KGB.\textsuperscript{82} By the spring, the Soviet leadership faced a clear

\textsuperscript{79} Dmitri Volkogonov, \textit{Rise and Fall of Soviet Empire: Political Leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev}, (Harpercollins Press 1999) pg. 262.


\textsuperscript{82} Dmitri Volkogonov, \textit{Autopsy for an Empire}, (Simon and Schuster Press, 1998) pp. 283.
dilemma. According to KGB reports, which described these events as “counter-revolutionary,” a tangible problem was emerging which required urgent attention. Most members of the Politburo still resisted direct intervention. Brezhnev himself vacillated upon the issue almost daily. One writer who worked in the party Central Committee in 1968 said that never “before had he seen such room for difference of opinion on any issue.” As events continued to spiral out of control and the failures of diplomatic action mounted, crisis approached. Hard line advocates of the invasion won out.

In mid-July a letter addressed to Brezhnev came via KGB channels from a member of the Czechoslovak Presidium. It read, among other things, that the leading party members in Czechoslovakia “are creating a serious danger for the very future of socialism.” This proved the straw which broke the camel’s back. The Soviet leadership was concerned that the brand of liberal Communism that was being implemented in Czechoslovakia could have a destabilizing impact upon the Warsaw Pact countries. Future diplomatic ventures were abrogated and preparations for invasion were readied. On the night of August 20th, 1968 at approximately 11:00 PM, Soviet troops rolled into Prague. Well-planned and expertly coordinated, Soviet troops quickly crossed over the border. A soviet airborne division captured Prague’s Ruzyne International airport. Artillery and tanks were transported via these access points. Alexander Dubcek beseeched his people not to resist the invasion. In justifying the invasion, Anatoly Dobrynin met with American President Lyndon Johnson and said there had “been a conspiracy of internal and external reaction against the social system…and the Soviet Union had replied to a

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84 Jiri Valenta, Soviet Intervention, pp.13.
85 Volkogonov, Autopsy for an Empire, pp. 285-286.
86 Quoted in Volkogonov, Autopsy for an Empire, pg. 287.
request by the Prague government for help.”"\textsuperscript{87} Casualties were minimal. But the implications were monumental.

The lasting legacy of Czechoslovakia extended far beyond the purview of international relations. The consequences stretched into the domestic arena of the USSR.\textsuperscript{88} While the vast majority of Russian people accepted the invasion as a necessity on behalf of Soviet security interests, portions of Russia’s cultural elites—the intelligentsia—rallied in opposition of the regime. The intelligentsia as a class had resurfaced after a long hiatus in the 1960s.\textsuperscript{89} Most were active throughout the 1960s in the realms of culture, politics, and society. For most of the intelligentsia, the thaw of the 1950s and early 1960s represented a pathway to greater reform under Leonid Brezhnev. However, Brezhnev did not share their ambitions. Disenchantment and disillusionment had been developing for quite a period of time amongst the educated class. With Czechoslovakia, all hope for substantive changes—specifically the liberalizing and humanist reforms certain members of the intelligentsia championed—dissipated. On August 25 a spectacular moment occurred in the confines of the Red Square. Seven protestors, Konstantin Babitsky, Larisa Bogoraz, Vadim Delone, Vladimir Dremliuga, Pavel Litvinov, Natalia Gorbanevskaia, and Vladimir Fainberg staged a public protest. They carried small Czech flags and posters. One poster read: “Long Live a free and independent Czechoslovakia.” Another poster showed the words “For your freedom and ours.” The KGB quickly arrested the protestors.\textsuperscript{90} Yevgeniy Yevtushenko appealed directly to Leonid Brezhnev in opposition to the invasion. Further, in Czechoslovakia a young student Jan Palach set himself on fire. Internally,

\textsuperscript{87} Anatoly Dobrynin, \textit{In Confidence}, pg 183.
\textsuperscript{89} Zubok, \textit{Zhivago’s Children}.
\textsuperscript{90} Vladislav Zubok, \textit{Zhivago’s Children}, pp. 292.
the leadership moved quickly to stifle these small patches of discontent and increased censorship protocols.

Ideological retrenchment seemed inevitable. Georgi Arbatov, a close insider to the Politburo, commented that after 1968 there was a massive shift to the right, at least in domestic affairs. This was accompanied by a growing crackdown of dissident activity. The objective of such a policy was the “defense of what leadership thought were the foundations of true socialism and socialist order.”91 During 1968, the KGB called thousands of intellectuals and students for interrogation and warned them against participating in dissent and samizdat activities. Public trials were organized and initiated to wheedle out opposition. The struggle against the dissident movement “took on a pervasive character,”92 as most of the gains of the Khrushchev and early Brezhnev years were reversed. Before August, a coalition for reform had seemed feasible among economic reformers, scientists, and left wing intellectuals; after 1968 such illusions had quickly dissipated.

In order to justify the new waves of repression and the “revival” of Stalinist tendencies, Leonid Brezhnev and the Soviet leadership turned to a traditional undercurrent of Soviet populist emotion: enmity. Within the politburo, there were fears that the intellectual elite’s “ambitions had support among the general populace.”93 Therefore, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the subsequent repression of dissidents required an explanation which could be easily distilled and internalized by the Soviet public. And the explanation had to supersede in importance the underlying and nascent desires for freedom which existed. This came in the form of a traditional Soviet foe: West Germany.

Anti-Fascism: Revanchism and Fear

The revitalization of the War Cult and the massive imagery which was unleashed on its behalf awakened a slew of emotions. Overwhelmingly, these emotions derived from a sense of pride in the accomplishments of the Soviet Union and its people. However, an additional element that surfaced in association with the Great Patriotic War was a sense of enmity and retribution toward Germany. Many families endured unmitigated suffering throughout the course of the Second World War; a war which was initiated by the wanton aggression of the German nation and the experience was difficult to eradicate. Coupled with the established narrative of the war—a narrative which allocated full blame to the German state—and it was not difficult to reignite popular sentiments against Germany. Individuals, influenced by decades of Soviet propaganda, looked toward West Germany as the villainous inheritors of the fascist tradition. This was the direction that the war cult turned to in 1968.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia came as a surprise to most citizens who were unfamiliar with the political artifice of the regime. Most accepted the invasion as a necessity for Soviet security interests. The larger framework of the Cold War informed the populace of the importance of security within the socialist orbit. Furthermore, the proximity of Czechoslovakia to West Germany and its prominent role in the legacy of the Second World War also served as valuable tools for shaping popular opinion. The fact that Czechoslovakia bordered on West Germany was “enough to justify the invasion.”94 It would be interesting to dwell further into detail about the ramifications of the invasion upon the Soviet populace but such large samples of public opinion do not exist. I speculate that the memory of Czechoslovakia in the war and the

94 Vladislav Zubok, Zhivago’s Children, pg 291.
implications of its subversion by West German forces lingered upon the minds of the public. However, I have little proof outside a limited degree of secondary sources. Certain citizens felt that without Soviet assistance, Czechoslovakia would have remained occupied and that a debt of gratitude was owed. Two hundred Russian soldiers had died there in order to free it from Fascism. Counterrevolution was interpreted as a sign of disrespect and ungratefulness. Whatever reason played most prominently on the minds of the citizenry, a fair contingent rallied behind the regime and encourage it to crush the budding revolution.

Soviet authorities exploited this sentiment by framing the invasion under the auspices of a Czechoslovakian request for help. According to press reports, the government beseeched the Soviet Union to render “urgent assistance, including assistance with armed forces.”95 This granted legitimacy to the Communist government and projected the crisis as one of internal subversion; a coup rather than a popular insurrection. Soviet authorities buttressed their reasoning for invasion by carefully outlining two stands which were intended to serve as proof that a preemptive strike was necessary. The first one was laid out by D. Kraminov in a Russian newspaper called the Communist. Writing, Kraminov noted that West German remained “hotbed of revanchism and neo-Nazism.”96 He continued that West Germany aided counterrevolutionary forces in East Germany, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Poland. Concluding that the progression of counterrevolution had reached Czechoslovakia, Kraminov stated that it needed to be abated.97 The second stand of the Soviet justification for invasion rested upon the assumption that Western imperial interests took every opportunity to undermine the Communist system. Foreign

95 Quoted in Robert A. Jones The Soviet Concept of Limited Sovereignty from Lenin to Gorbachev: The Brezhnev Doctrine, (St. Martens Press, 1990) pp. 151
97 Similar references to revanchism and German aggression are found within other press mediums in the Satellite countries. See RFER.LE, no. 32, 31, August 1968.
minister Andrei Gromyko spoke at the United Nations shortly following the invasion. His speech outlined how important it was to protect Soviet security interests against the “imperialist intrigues.” West Germany was included under this umbrella term of imperialism because of its central role in both NATO and the geopolitical cache it held within the Cold War paradigm.

West Germany and the memory of its role in the Second World War were actively cultivated by the regime in order to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia. According to Zdenek Mlyna, a member of the Dubcek government who witnessed the invasion firsthand, Brezhnev’s justifications were based on a model of security informed exclusively from a personal memory of the Second World War. Brezhnev “spoke at length about the sacrifices of the Soviet Union in the Second World War: the soldiers fallen in battle, the civilians slaughtered, the enormous material losses, the hardships suffered by the Soviet people.” At such a cost “the Soviet Union had gained security and the guarantee of that security remained the division of Europe and specifically the fact that Czechoslovakia was linked with the Soviet Union forever.” This was immediately reinforced through the projection of images revolving around the Second World War. The focus of the war cult shifted to reintroduce the Soviet people with the endemic evils of fascism and to remind them of the material losses which were suffered at its hand.

The cartoon which most vividly depicts this new shift in the projection of Soviet foreign policy was produced by the Soviet satirical journal Krokodil (crocodile) and labeled Figure 9 on the page below. Drawn in October of 1968—a few months after the initial surge of Soviet troops into Czechoslovakia—the cartoon shows a line of militarists, revanchists, and

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98 Speech was presented in the Russian newspaper Izvestia, No 5. October 1968, page 4.
Figure 9. Courtesy of Krokodil 1968
constabularies in the shape of the NAZI swastika. By connecting the image—and the symbolism of the swastika—with the acronym at the bottom of the page, which stands for the Czechoslovakia Soviet Socialist Party, the cartoonist makes clear indictments about the state of Czechoslovakian affairs. Czechoslovakia is corrupted by fascism. By incorporating such an image, the cartoonist appealed to a visceral hate toward fascism, which traced its origin to the Second World War. Through the direction of the artist, the memory of the Second World War was intended to inspire enmity toward Czechoslovakia. Hence, the war cult was manipulated to reflect the negative role Germany played in the war.

Starting as early as 1968 and corresponding with the beginning of unrest in Czechoslovakia, Brezhnev propaganda artists began to focus the Soviet populace toward the negative role Germany played in the Second World War. This marked the first time that artists had vilified Germany with such consistency during the Brezhnev era. The first image, marked Figure 10, mirrored the early posters of the Brezhnev period which focused on glorifying the Soviet military. The soldier in the background is from the Civil War and the second soldier is either from the Second World War or the 1960s. Through such a juxtaposition of iconography the cartoonist attempts to bind the historical experience of the Soviet military with its present day contemporaries. Simultaneously, the poster introduced a wide breadth of unique imagery. The words at the top read fifty years in the ranks, with the implications being quite clear: that not only has the soldier played a prominent role in Soviet history but that he still remains an integral component of the Soviet state. At the bottom, there is a picturesque representation of the villains which have plagued the Soviet Union. The images on the right revolve around the Civil War—with two of the three looking like caricatures of White Army Generals.
Figure 10. The image can be found in the Russian satirical magazine Krokodil, Vol. 2 February 1968
On the left hand side, one easily discernable image is that of Adolf Hitler holding his seminal work, *Mien Kumpf*. Based on the previous message of the poster, the cartoonist seems to be suggesting that the threat of fascism does not restrict itself solely to the circumstances of the Second World War. And because of this, the Soviet soldier must remain vigilant. The second image, titled *Figure 11*, is much more belligerent. In it a member of the N.D.P proposes an investigation and presumably a reorganization of the current territorial agreements which existed. Responding to the West German politician, a grotesque caricature of Adolf Hitler says with admonition that “I also started with this but this is how the action ended.” The image’s intention rings as a warning for revanchists. Pierced through the heart of Hitler, a Russian bayonet stands at ready to shield the Soviet Union from aggression and any designs upon its provinces. Through its aggressive style, clearly the artist tries to represent the dire nature of the situation. And to him the situation in Czechoslovakia reveals another manifestation of West German aggression.

The propaganda intensified as the year of 1968 came to a close. The image, *Figure 12*, was produced in the fall of 1968 after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. At the bottom, the words deliver a stern warning to revanchists: “the defeat of Fascism is a lesson to the revanchists.” The message is clear. Just like the Soviets defeated the fascists in 1945, they will defeat them in 1968 in Czechoslovakia. It is interesting to note that the cartoonist implies that revanchism is a successor to fascism. The regime intentionally tried to project global developments in this capacity because it was easy to inspire fear by referring to the legacy of fascism. Especially since the Soviet citizenry had suffered such intense agony at the hands of the Third Reich.
Figure 11. And I Started with This, http://www.russianposter.ru/index.php?rid=00000000000004
Figure 12. Defeat of Fascism is a Lesson to Revanchism. By O.D. Maslakov. www.russianposter.ru
The anti-fascist/revanchist imagery was not just restricted to the year of 1968. In fact, it continued into 1969 as well. The poster on the following page, titled *Figure 13*, was created a year after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. It insinuated that the Bonn government was actively engaged in pursuit of territorial acquisition—whether the Bonn government actually maintained revanchist tendencies at the time period is difficult to determine. The older soldier instructs the newer one by offering him these words of advice: “in the gateway of Bonn you can hear a mad and angry bark—and you should never lower your eyes from this pack of revanchists.” By portraying the West Germans as dogs, the cartoon aims to paint a derogatory image of West Germany. The Russian people identified with these images because the memory of the Second World War remained ripe in their minds. Anti-German rhetoric was a steady feature in the post-war lexicon. Inspired by the memory of the Second World War, fear of revanchsim was heavy among the populace. Such posters attempted to play upon such sentiments during the Czechoslovakia crisis; whereas during the initial stages of the Brezhnev government such propaganda was not as prominent.

From the years of 1968 to 1969, the Brezhnev regime rechanneled its propaganda effort. By stressing the connection between the current West German government and its revanchist tendencies, the regime attempted to ignite fear among the Soviet populace. This fear was rooted in the collective experiences of the Second World War. War memory influenced the interpretation and negative outlook of the Soviet people toward “revanchists.” Furthermore, by connecting Czechoslovakia with revanchism and fascism as *Figure 9* did, the regime attempted to gain legitimacy for its actions in Czechoslovakia. Imagery, just like rhetoric, allowed people to draw explanations for Soviet aggression. Such aggression became acceptable because it was justified under the guise of preventative action. Informed by war memory, the populace
embraced the invasion of Czechoslovakia because they recalled the dangers of allowing revanchist tendencies to go unchecked. Such was the lesson of the Great Patriotic War and it continued into the late 1960s.
Figure 13. "The Lying Dog" by V. Lukinets and G.K Shubina via http://www.russianposter.ru/index.php?rid=00000000000004
Reviving Peace: The Peace Cult

The forced abdication of Nikita Khrushchev in October 1964 served as a referendum on his erratic conduct and personality. Most Politburo members were highly critical of his policy of brinkmanship and boisterous clamoring in the international arena which brought the Soviet Union closer to nuclear war—an event which was punctuated by the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Following the ouster of Khrushchev and ascension of Brezhnev, the foreign policy arena was dominated by a cacophony of discordant ideas. Vacillating between the need to appear firm and desiring to achieve peace, the initial period was marked by shifts and turns. On one hand, Brezhnev enthusiastically spoke of peace. Yet simultaneously, and perhaps in lasting irony, military spending escalated to unprecedented amounts. Supported strongly by the military, the notion of peace through strength gained increasing popularity. As a result, between 1965 and 1968 a colossal armament program was launched. By 1968 the strategic missile force was consuming about 18% of the Soviet budget. The military industrial complex surged under the Brezhnev administration. Near the start of the Brezhnev period, almost a third of Politburo members had spent seven years or more in the military. As such, the Brezhnev leadership enjoyed very good relations with the armed forces for the first ten years of his reign. Yet, the objective of peace continued to occupy a central role in the matrix of the Soviet mind.

100 A special report was prepared on mistakes of Khrushchev’s foreign policy by Dmitry Polyansky. It concluded that Soviet behavior during the crisis hurt the reputation of the Soviet Union.
101 Unfortunately, I cannot go further into detail, but the historiography is saturated with material on the subject. See Michael Sodoro, Moscow, Germany, and the West. Vladislav Zubok, A Failed Empire.
103 Stephen Lovell, Shadow of War, pg 51.
For a country baptized under the fire of revolution, struggle, and warfare, the quest for peace superseded any other in the Soviet Union. Even current public opinion polling reveals that the most endearing characteristic of the Brezhnev period was its ability to provide stability and peace to its denizens.\footnote{Taken from a public opinion survey referenced in Edwin Bacon’s “Reconsidering Brezhnev” in \textit{Brezhnev Reconsidered}, (Palgrave Macmillan Press, 2002) pp 9.} For Brezhnev himself, peace had always been a primary motivation for his foreign policy agenda. World War II became a major life-shaping experience for Brezhnev as he witnessed the travails of combat firsthand. Having spent four years at the front, Brezhnev wrote “the memory of those who didn’t return home” intensified his desire to prevent military conflagration.\footnote{Leonid Brezhnev, \textit{Pages From My Life}, written under the Auspices of the Moscow Academy of Sciences, pp. 10.} For him, nothing outweighed the significance of a Soviet people living under peace. As Georgi Arbatov noted in his personal memoir, “peace was in no way a propagandistic slogan or just a popular tribute to the mood of the public.” Instead it was a serious political motive of the top leadership.\footnote{Georgi Arbatov, \textit{The System}, pp. 85-86.} Yet the move toward peace stagnated in the 1960s.

Traditional balance of power theories continued to reign supreme amidst the members of the Politburo. According to Vladislav Zubok, the post-Khrushchev coalition of political leaders belonged to a generation of individuals who identified with the direction forged by Stalin. This included a firm belief in the necessity of armed conflict.\footnote{Vladislav Zubok, \textit{A Failed Empire}, pp. 195-197.} During the preparation of Brezhnev’s report for the Party Congress in March 1966, advisers encouraged him to avoid using words like “the principle of peaceful coexistence” and “prevention of world war.” Instead, there was a push to inform the Soviet public of the brutalities of the United States government and the growing fascist trends of Western Europe.\footnote{Georgi Arbatov, \textit{The System}, pp. 180.} Talk of war and military confrontation was ubiquitous. The tension was palpable. And it seemed that the American invasion of Vietnam, Israel’s victory in
the 6 Day War, the unraveling of the Communist coalition with China, and the growing unrest in Czechoslovakia validated these fears. Nonetheless, it was Leonid Brezhnev himself who stepped up to the challenge of the times.

Brezhnev lacked the intellectual capacity to clearly articulate and comprehend complex geopolitical developments. However, he possessed a shrewd ability to charm and an unrelenting faith in the promise of peace. When Brezhnev met with Richard Nixon for the first time, he suggested that they conclude an agreement directed against any third country which would act aggressively. To Nixon this seemed like a political ploy, but to Brezhnev this represented a life-long dream; the abolition of war.\footnote{Vladislav Zubok, \textit{A Failed Empire}, pg 202.} For Brezhnev, the promise of peace outweighed the notion of collective security, or peace through strength. Instead, peace became an idealistic vision personally perpetuated by the head of the Communist Party.

Beginning in 1967, Brezhnev began to tighten his grip upon the Politburo. Slowly and cunningly, he removed his major rivals so that by 1968 he became the uncontested head of the Soviet government with the primary power to make appointments and control foreign policy. This offered him the platform to finally implement his peace initiative. Relying more heavily upon liberal minded foreign policy experts like Georgi Arbatov, Alexander Bovin, Evgeny Samoteikin, Anatoly Chernyaev; Leonid Brezhnev forged a new direction. The crisis in Czechoslovakia only reinforced Brezhnev’s convictions that the objective of peace transcended any other.

For the ordinary observer, the invasion of Czechoslovakia did not provide any alteration from the routine of ordinary life. If anything, it reaffirmed the status quo. However for Brezhnev
it represented a direct challenge to his leadership ability. Party leaders like Petro Shelest blamed Brezhnev’s “rotten liberalism” for the crisis in Czechoslovakia. Polish leaders Gomulka and GDR leader Ulbricht pushed for invasion and criticized Brezhnev’s lack of boldness. Following the invasion, Brezhnev emerged a new man. His adviser and confidante Alexander Bovin remarked that “from the crucible of Czechoslovakia emerged a different Brezhnev.” It granted him the confidence and political cache to embark upon the adventurous program of détente. Speaking in front of the Party Plenum in 1972, Brezhnev told the members “without the invasion of Czechoslovakia there would have been no Brandt in Germany, no Nixon in Moscow, no détente.”

Peace became a key feature of the war cult and the imaging of the Second World War. While peace as both a symbol and objective of the Soviet populace always remained a part of the initial War cult, the late 1960s brought it more clear into focus. From its inception, the construction of monuments and the publishing of memoirs—all activities which represented the complex matrix of symbols that came to be defined as the War Cult—served as a reminder of not only the prominence but also of the sacrifices required by war. The latter of the two blended more broadly into the objective of peace. Yet peace itself was not in the foreground. It took a backstop to the more visible aims of commemoration and glorification. Following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, poster art and cinema less clearly (because film was not as adept at rapidly shifting course it was not as clear) attempted to use the experience of the Second World War to validate the new direction of the regime toward Détente, Ostpolitik, and peace.

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110 For the criticism from Petro Shelest see his memoir, Da ne sudimi budete, pp. 287.
111 Bovin, XX vek kak zhizn, pg 194-95.
The year 1969 proved to be defining not only for the Soviet Union and its foreign policy initiatives but for the War Cult as well. Historian Michael Sodaro notes that 1969 marked the turning point in Soviet-West German relations. The widening economic gap between the communist and capitalist countries and the additional political cache granted Brezhnev the platform to pursue an amelioration of relations between the Soviet Union and Western Germany. Most of the upper brass remained divided about the new foreign policy direction, but by 1969, it became increasingly clear that Brezhnev remained steadfast in his aims. On July 10, Andrei Gromyko announced the Soviet government’s readiness to resume negotiations with Bonn on a renunciation-of-force treaty which would become the catalyst for the movement of Ostpolitik and a forerunner to rapprochement with Western Europe and the United States. Peace as an objective for Soviet foreign policy was in full swing; as was the propaganda effort geared toward transforming the War Cult into the Peace Cult.

One of the first images to appear in 1969 that promoted peace as a legitimate objective of foreign policy is shown on the following page (figure 14). It advocated for the creation of a day, June 1st for the global defense of Children. Children have long been utilized as a symbol for peace in the realm of political propaganda. Everything from their innocuous features to their inability to fend for themselves spoke of frailty and innocence. This was carefully calculated on the part of the regime, which maintained tremendous influence over the cultural apparatus. The years following Czechoslovakia were marked by a stringent curtailment of liberalization policies and a retrenchment of conservative values domestically. As noted by Georgi Arbatov, imperial

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112 Michael Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West From Khrushchev to Gorbachev*, pg. 135-165.
113 More of this will be discussed in the coming chapters. Great references on German-Soviet relations during this time period include Angela Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn*, Michael Sodaro’s *Moscow, Germany, and the West*. For East German-Soviet relations see M.E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil, etc.*
foreign policy and conservative even reactionary domestic politics are always linked.\textsuperscript{114} However, it was by far not the only image or even the more pronounced. The year of 1970 brought a clearer representation of the regime’s message.

\textsuperscript{114} Georgi Arbatov, \textit{The System}, pg. 138.
Figure 14. "Defending Children" Author Unknown. www.russianposter.ru
By the year of 1970, the regime had a much more clearly defined objective for its peace message. While the image below (Figure 15) seems like a direct attack upon the United States and its imperial policies in Vietnam and in third World countries, the larger focus is clearly on peace. The people marching hold signs decrying aggression, armament construction, and costly intervention. But more importantly, the images speak to the conscience of the Soviet populace. The primary objective of foreign policy should be the pursuit of peace—a message which reverberated with all members of the Soviet populace. According to the image, acts of aggression were embarrassing to the world. The middle poster reads “no war.” And the final poster reads “peace to Vietnam.” An image of an atomic bomb with the words peace scribbled next to it is evident at the bottom. These images coalesce to represent a narrative that the regime sought to create. On one hand, it ridiculed the United States for its interruption of peace and simultaneously it implored it to halt nuclear armament construction and engage in negotiations. Peace was the overwhelming message ensconced into the poster.
Figure 15. "Embarrassment" by V.M. Briskin via http://www.russianposter.ru/index.php?rid=00000000000004
Conclusion

The years of 1968-1970 are an interesting and contradictory era of Soviet history. By 1968, Leonid Brezhnev became the uncontested head of the party apparatus, with the full ability to make and rescind appointments. Nonetheless, he remained untested in the foreign policy arena. Czechoslovakia presented him with type of option to not only gain valuable experience on the international stage but also to further cement his domestic legitimacy. All along, Brezhnev hoped to avoid “extreme measures,” and vacillated between initiating the invasion and continuing to search for alternative solutions. Finally in August 21, 1968, Soviet tanks rolled into Prague in order to crush the nascent liberal reforms.

Soviet actions in Czechoslovakia remain difficult to evaluate. On one hand, the invasion of Czechoslovakia granted Leonid Brezhnev the necessary political cache to pursue a policy of peace with both West Germany and the United States. Yet simultaneously it created a lot of disenchantment among the most liberal members of the party apparatus. Writing in his dairy, Alexander Bovin noted that it was “the biggest political error during the post war time.” Anatoly Chernyaev wanted to resign from the Central Committee. Many Gorbachev era reformers pointed to Czechoslovakia as the watershed moment in their lifetime and attributed many of their beliefs to the alienation they felt to the present regime. Domestically, the crackdown on the dissident movement correlated with the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Many of

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117 Almost every interview that is recorded in Stephen Cohen’s, *Voices of Glasnost* (W.W. Norton and Company, 1991) touches upon the issue of Czechoslovakia. For the most dynamic account of the internal change which took place among reformists see the interview of Lev Karpinsky.
the leading intellectuals faced tremendous pressure to conform and any lasting illusions about the
democratization and liberalization of Soviet society had dissipated. It is difficult to assert exactly
how the invasion of Czechoslovakia impacted the more politically removed denizens of the
Soviet Union. Without concrete opinion data, one may speculate that it had a marginal impact if
any. The dissident movement was not evidence of a deeper schism in Soviet society as many
Western historians have speculated. It was a minority movement that did not represent the
interests of masses. Some historians continue to speculate that the moral bankruptcy of the
regime which precipitated the collapse of the Soviet Union was caused by the invasion of
Czechoslovakia.\(^{118}\) Personally, I am skeptical of this argument because the overwhelming
majority of people continued to have faith in the regime. Yet there was a manner by which the
invasion of Czechoslovakia did have a more direct impact upon the Soviet populace; in the
projection of the War Cult.

As much as Czechoslovakia was the turning point for the Brezhnev period, it also marked
a similar change in direction for the projection of the War Cult. Whereas the preceding years of
the Brezhnev period were marked by a glorification of the Second World War, the events in
Czechoslovakia required a different spin. The regime needed to explain to the populace of the
Soviet Union the motivations behind the invasion of Czechoslovakia. By leveraging the Soviet
experiences of the Second World, the regime used the threat of German aggression to sway the
populace to support the invasion. Images of Czechoslovakia overcome by neo-Nazi and
revanchists from West Germany—the hotbed of such activity—was produced in publications
like Krokodil and in the form of War Posters. In this capacity, the memory of the Second World
War was cultivated in order to sway popular opinion in the direction that the regime required.

\(^{118}\) Phillip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in the Soviet Union*, (Routledge, 2005).
This continued with the introduction of the peace dimension to the War Cult. Nascent negotiations with West Germany and the United States represented a shift of the Cold War status quo from antagonism toward reconciliation. The foundation of war memory served as both an impetus and explication of the new trajectory. Through images of the regime could frame negotiations as a choice between “cooperation or confrontation, a policy of peace or a policy of war.” And for every Russian who lived in the Soviet Union, the motivation for avoiding war was flagrant. The promise of peace superseded the enmity which had formed toward both Germany and the United States. In this way, war memory continued to serve the political volitions of the regime.

119 Andrey Edemskiy, “The Soviet Response to Ostpolitik, pg. 27.”
Chapter 3 1970-1974: Realizing Peace

*If everyone fought for their own convictions there would be no war.**

–Leo Tolstoy, War and Peace

The implementation of the peace agenda took center stage at the turn of the decade. Brezhnev finally had the opportunity to implement his grandiose vision; a vision informed by the dangerous and unyielding nature of combat. And he pursued it vigilantly. For years the Soviet Union imagined—through iconography, cinematography, and rhetoric—West Germany as a virulent base consumed by revanchist tendencies and fascist inclinations. However, the inception of the year 1970 brought a rapprochement with the Federal Republic of Germany. The changing direction of Soviet policy was manifested through a new representation of Germany and the Second World War.

War no longer became a glorified endeavor for the regime. Instead its brutality took center stage as the War Cult shifted to reflect the new direction imposed upon it by the regime. Certain historians like Denise Youngblood refer to the beginning of the 1970s as a period of liberalization in the cinema industry. For Youngblood, the changes in the cinema industry and the new “Khrushchev-esque” focus on the realities of war stemmed from the personal efforts of individual directors. According to her, these directors acquired the requisite aptitude to more carefully navigate the contours of censorship which were imposed by the regime’s bureaucracy. And while there might certainly be some validity to this claim, it does not account for the changes which took place within the representative narratives of individual directors over the
time period ranging from 1965 to 1974. Certain directors, who were discussed in greater detail, that produced seminal works of the Khrushchev era, resorted to a more constrained projection of the war during the beginning of the Brezhnev era. Likewise, certain directors responsible for producing more conservative projections of the Second World War resorted to more liberal trends in the 1970s. Rather, the more accurate explanation was that the regime also played a hand in enforcing these changes. The new vision for the War Cult was expressed in the highest chambers of the political elite and disseminated to directors. Directors then further propagated this narrative to the populace. While within the structure, there were multiple opportunities to refine and even reject the narrative, the overwhelming trends in the movie industry suggest that the regime’s influence was quite persuasive.

Additionally, within the iconography and cinematography, the image of Germany was rehabilitated. Previously, Germans on the cinema screen and in poster images were brutishly caricaturized as thugs and simpletons. Now, they were represented with careful attention to their human qualities. Such productions were sanctioned under the auspices of Soviet officials in order to marginalize the hate which existed toward Germany and the United States. By projecting the Germans and Americans as capable adversaries and more importantly humans, the Soviet populace was expected to embrace rapprochement not with “fascist pigs” but human beings. All of these developments played out through the complex projection of images related to the Second World War.
Rehabilitating Germany

For decades following the Second World War, the nature of German and Soviet relations was acrimonious at best. The imposition of buffer states and the bifurcation of Germany stemmed from a Soviet desire to marginalize the possibility of military encroachment. However, the ambitions of the Soviet Union were difficult to reconcile with the stated objective of the West German government: reunification. During the first twenty years of the FRG’s existence, West Germany refused to acknowledge the postwar boundaries of Europe including the creation of the Soviet satellite states and the division of Germany.\(^\text{120}\) This rejection of the territorial status quo extended into the diplomatic arena, as West Germany refused to initiate diplomatic relations with East Germany and develop economic relationships with the GDR.\(^\text{121}\) This was the essence of what the Soviets called revanchism.

From 1949 to 1969, the Soviet policy toward the Federal Republic of Germany was confrontational. The Soviets accused West Germany of being an heir to the Nazi state and a puppet of the imperialist United States and Western Europe. Moreover, their relationship was spiked by specific episodes of bluster which encapsulated the animosity which permeated Soviet-German relations. These historical moments included the controversial blockade of Berlin in the


\(^{121}\) Under the Hallstein Doctrine, the Federal Republic, as the sole representative of the German nation refused to have diplomatic relations with any country that recognized the GDR. The doctrine was first implemented in 1957. It was only abrogated in 1967.
late 1940s, disagreements in the early 1950s, and the erection of the wall dividing Berlin in the 1960s. All of which was fully marinated by the Soviet propaganda apparatus.

The negative characterization of West Germany by the Soviet Union in the international arena was reflected within the domestic sphere. During the Great Patriotic War, Soviet propaganda worked tirelessly to reinforce the “enemy image of Germany.” The works of Boris Efimov and many others galvanized the Soviet masses and inspired hatred toward their Nazi occupiers. Such propaganda did not abate with the progression of the 20th century. In fact, one only has to analyze the archival records of the satirical magazine Krokodil around the aforementioned flash points to witness a slew of caricaturized images denouncing the actions of the FRG. Even within the context of the Brezhnev era, such rhetorical and iconography vitriol remained prominent. Czechoslovakia provides a concrete illustration of the anti-German imagery which surfaced. However, with the turn of the decade into the 1970s, growing economic problems and a realization of the benefits of rapprochement changed all that.

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122 For a more detailed and comprehensive examination of Soviet-German relations see Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West-German and Soviet Relations, 1955-1980.*
124 See caption on the following page.
Figure 16. Projection of German soldier from 1944. Via Krokodil
Cinema: The image of Germany and the Memory of World War II

As the political dimensions of the international and domestic arena changed in the 1970s, reflecting developments in Ostpolitik and Détente, so too did the cultural productions of the time period. This was best illustrated by the cinematography of the time period. As the decade of the 1960s continued to pass, new conservative lines were established in the industry with productions such as Liberation highlighting the new trajectory that the regime envisioned. The modes of coercion were not as directly defined as during the Stalin period where deviations were punished by clear and often stringent penalties. But they existed all the same. The most fundamental aspect of the experience for filmmakers during the Brezhnev years was banning. Of the unprecedented amount of films which were produced (an average of 140-150), a significant amount failed to reach the cinema screen entirely. \(^{125}\) In conjunction with banning, Gosfilm exercised additional methods of control by channeling resources and advertisement space towards favored directors. The financial incentives for towing the party line were immense as the most conforming directors were rewarded with unparalleled advertising opportunities, prodigious production budgets, and the continued access to the support of the political elite.\(^{126}\) The Brezhnev regime exerted effort to gain control over the film industry and influence it in accordance with the party line. And while the 1960s brought a revival of a patriotic film culture, the 1970s saw a shift in representation, which was influenced by the progression of Ostpolitik and the shifting perception of West Germany.


\(^{126}\) Youngblood, *On the Cinema Front*, pg. 162.
The cinematography of the Great Patriotic War shifted focus during the 1970s. The most popular war films of the 1970s were ones which “least resembled *Liberation* and the other male-dominated combat films that were churned out with some regularity” throughout the late 1960s. This modification was defined by a new thematic emphasis upon individual struggle—resembling the one utilized by Thaw directors in the 1950s and early 1960s—and new models of representation for the German adversaries. Films like Stanislav Rostotsky’s *And the Dawns are Quiet Here* (*A zori zdes’ tikhie*, 1972) was named best picture of 1972 and led box offices in 1973 for its attendance figures. Directors like Sergei Bondarchuk and Grigory Chukhrai returned to the topic of the Great Patriotic War and invested it with a level of humanism and poignancy. Similarly, the projection of German soldiers was rehabilitated on the cinema screen. Whereas before when filmmakers refused to delve beyond the simplistic projections reserved for the “perfidious enemy fascists,” the 1970s saw a much more nuanced and even generous representation of the Nazi aggressors. It goes without saying that Goskino continued to sanction and promote movies about the Great Patriotic War which remained consistent with the values of patriotism and heroism that defined the initial stages of the War Cult. However, the emergence of nuanced and multifaceted accounts of the war appeared in far greater abundance than during the late 1960s.

Certain films in the 1970s elicited the pathos of the audience by stressing the individualized themes of struggle and camaraderie. Of these, perhaps the most poignant is Stanislav Rostotsky’s *And the Dawns are Quiet Here*. The story revolves around women’s corps which is stationed in a small village. Their objective is to defend the region from Germans. One day when reports surface warning of a German approach, the sergeant major and five of the

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young women head out on a scouting party. Each of the women is killed and only the sergeant major survives to commemorate their heroic deeds. The film strikes a significant amount of emotional nerves. The common theme of innocence is repeatedly emphasized. Most of the females are presented in pristine and angelic fashion. They are youthful and yet uncorrupted by the horrors of the war. The films tone is initially one of lightheartedness and joviality. Yet it quickly changes. The women are real people, full of the emotional complexities which define humans more broadly. One woman vomits after she kills a German. Another displays unmitigated courage in the face of certain death. The heroines have doubts about not only their own existence but of the war itself. The stoicism of war heroes which permeated the cinema screen in the late 1960s is transplanted by the emotional vagaries of the females who experience combat, death, and remorse for the first time. An additional contributing factor to the emotional weight of the film results from the fact that the women all die. Each one is picked off one by one. And their deaths are presented in individualized and somewhat drawn out fashion. Women, by nature of their association with the themes of civility and culture, are usually spared such cruel faith in the course of cinema productions. The topic is taboo. Yet, the And the Dawns are Quiet Here, utilizes this practice to heighten the emotional reverberations of the subject matter. The film was both critically and popularly acclaimed by audiences. It represented a new direction for the projection of the war cult. It moved to push the envelope away from the monotone and grandiose productions seen before and to remind audiences of the endemic violence and struggle that defined the Second World War.

Another film which capitalized on the theme of individual loss and negative transformation was Gavril Yeviazarov’s Burning Snow (Gorchiachi neg, 1972). It follows the narrative of an army battalion which operates around the Battle of Stalingrad (it isn’t actually set
in Stalingrad). One of the main characters, Kolya is a neophyte lieutenant who just comes to the front. His character is juxtaposed with the equally aged but far sterner battalion commander, Volodya. Volodya stands in complete contrast to Kolya, defined by his stoic and battle hardened features. Even though a significant element of the film focuses on the love triangle which emerges between Kolya, Volodya, and Tanya (the nurse and camp wife of Volodya) the film’s most valuable moments occur in the heat of combat. After Tanya is killed both Volodya and Kolya express visible grief. However, when the battalion is encircled by German soldiers, Kolya takes the lead and directs the remaining soldiers to safety, while Volodya is emotionally incapacitated by the loss of Tanya. Burning snow struck a chord with viewers.¹²⁸ Not only did it seem that the boys had no idea what they are fighting for but more importantly they were exposed to the grim realities of combat and they were intrinsically transformed by it. The image of youth overwhelmed by the agonies of combat is constantly repeated. Films like There the Soldiers Went (Aty-baty shli soldaty, 1976) and Remember Your Name (Pomni imia svoe, 1974) all present the same scenario: youth caught in the crosshairs of war. And more significantly, films like Burning Snow, Only the Old Go to Battle, There the Soldiers Went, show “very young men cut down in the name of life, not the Party or motherland.”¹²⁹ “In the Name of Light” is actually the inscription carved into the memorial dedicated to the young soldiers who die at the end of the battle in There the Soldiers Went. Undoubtedly, the theme of subverted youth and the individualized experiences of soldiers at the front marked a shift away from the familiar notions of patriotism and motherland. Equally as significant was the profound swing in the representation of enemy combatants during the war upon the cinema screen.

¹²⁸ Movie watches who responded to Soviet Screen’s annual survey ranked it among the top ten films of the year for 1972.
¹²⁹ Youngblood, On the Cinema Front, pg. 171-172.
Representations of the German enemy changed drastically during the 1970s on the cinema screen. One film which tackles this issue head on is *It was the Month of May* (Byl’ mesiats mai, 1971) directed by Marlen Khutsiev. The film examines the conclusion of the war. Taking place several days after the collapse of the Third Reich, five Soviet scouts are stationed in the house of a wealthy German and his family. Inside the well-kept farmhouse, the soldiers attempt to flirt with the wife, share drinks with the man, and play with the teenage son. The atmosphere remains tense, but the Germans are portrayed in human terms. They each have individual personalities. Scenes of merriment and drink are presented. The film’s climax takes place when the band of drunken soldiers discovers an abandoned complex which reveals the presence of a death camp with a crematorium. In the evening, several poles stumble into the house looking for the German host. It is uncovered that the kindly host had participated in the war effort and was partially responsible for the operations of the camp. It comes as a shock to the soldiers to discover their host’s complicity despite his repeated toasts of “Hitler kaput” and “Krieg Kaput.” Perhaps, one would interpret this to be a demonization of the host. However, the very fact that Khutsiev dedicates such a degree of attention to fleshing out the contradictions in the German character reveals much about the new direction of Soviet cinema. Germans are no longer presented in monolithic and vast groups all similar to one another. Instead, there is a degree of humanity which the director injects into the host. He drinks and toasts. He cares for his family. Simultaneously, the contradictory revelation of his crimes shows much about the manner by which the Soviet Union envisioned Germany. The final acts of the film serve as a reminder between the distinctions of the GDR and the Third Reich they left behind. The paradoxically manner by which the German is projected serves as a microcosm for relations between the Soviet Union and Germany during the time of Détente (a subject I will return to in greater detail later).
Television has not played a dominant role in my analysis of the War Cult because of the difficulty of working with the subject matter. However, this is not to suggest that its role was not significant; far from it in fact, its role cannot be undervalued. It provided a critical medium for the regime in order to export its message. According to historian Ellen Mickiewicz, “Soviet television tried to change the moral and ethical nature of the population.” In 1960, only five percent of the population had a television. However, by 1976, more than seven million television sets were being produced in a year. Regrettably, I could not cover this in greater detail, but through *Seventeen Moments*, I hope to underscore the value of television in forming Soviet attitudes; especially in relation to the War Cult.

No film best exemplified the overall mood of Détente and Ostpolitik than *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (*Semnadtsat Mgnoveniy Vesny*). This film was actually a twelve-part television miniseries, directed by Tatyana Lioznova and based on a novel by Julian Semenov. The direction and editing of the movie was heavily influenced by the Soviet apparatus and by director of the KGB, Yuri Andropov. Andropov desired to rehabilitate the image of the KGB, and believed that the portrayal of the secret services role in winning the war would serve as the appropriate antidote for such a venture. Filming started in 1971 in East Germany and continued until 1973. The plot follows Maxim Isaev, a Soviet spy who has successfully infiltrated the Nazi Party under the pseudonym of Max Otto von Stierlitz. Stierlitz’s role in the series is to obstruct secret negotiations between the Americans and the Germans, which are aimed at forging a

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separate peace. Simultaneously, the SS become suspicious of an infiltrator among their ranks and Heinrich Muller launches a secret investigation against Steirlitz after his suspected. Aside from the film’s plot, which was fairly clear-forward, the film’s popularity and impact were tremendous. During the original run, each episode was watched between 50 and 80 million viewers, making it the most successful television show of its time. 132 Ivan Zasursky described the public’s reaction: “during its first showing, city streets would empty. It was a larger than life hit, attracting greater audiences than hockey matches.”133 The interpretation of Seventeen Moments was even more profound. Unlike other Soviet spy thrillers that focused on demonizing either capitalism or the enemies of the Soviet Union, Seventeen Moments featured virtually “no such political message.”134 Another stark distinction needs to be made in the projection of the German adversary. The plot parsed Germans into good ones and bad ones. Besides presenting several Germans like Schlag and Pleischneer who assisted Steirlitz, even Muller was portrayed almost amicably. Vladimir Shlapentokh believed the series’ achieved its popularity by depicting an “exciting espionage story while luring the Intelligentsia by making weakly disguised parallels between Nazi Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union.”135 In fact, the film’s portrayal of Germany was so appealing that Russian political scientists Yuri Krasin and Alexander Galkin linked the rise of the Soviet Union’s Neo-Nazi movement in the 1970s with the “romantic depiction” of wartime Germany and its leaders in the series. Richard Stites wrote that leaders of a Neo-Nazi cell were influenced to such an extent by Seventeen Moments that they called themselves after some of the leading characters. 136 Seventeen Moments clearly embodied the new shift in Soviet

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133 Ivan Zasursky, Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia (M.E. Sharpe, 2004) pg. 133.
cinema toward a more personalized depiction of the Second World War and a more favorable projection of the enemy adversary. And its role was critically in shaping popular opinion concerning the movement of Ostpolitik and Détente.

Developing Ostpolitik: War memory and the Foundations for Peace

The 1970s are unique in the postwar history of the Soviet Union because they represent the emergence of Détente, which reached its height at a series of summits in the middle of the decade. For some members of the Soviet Union like the military and stringent hard-liners within the Politburo, the idea of peaceful negotiations with a Capitalist country seemed like a forfeiture of the very tenets of Communism. But because Brezhnev lived through a devastating war and because he identified the internal trends within the Soviet populace to put peace before all other things, he was willing to sacrifice ideology for practicality. As Soviet-American relations traveled toward the trajectory of peace, the issue of European security became a primary concern for Brezhnev. The vitriol that Brezhnev felt toward Nazi Germany was clear from his speeches and ghost written memoirs. He attributed his enlistment in the Soviet military to his desire to “drive the Nazi scum from our land.” And yet, beginning in 1969, he embarked upon a policy of accommodation and rapprochement with West Germany.

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137 Anatoly Dobrynin, In Confidence, pp. 196-197.
138 Leonid Brezhnev, Pages from My Life, pp. 49.
Ostpolitik emerged through a combination of mutually overlapping agendas on behalf of the Bonn government and Leonid Brezhnev. Previously, the West German government refused to recognize the German Democratic Republic and repudiated the territorial status quo. This created a milieu of distrust and fear over German revanchist tendencies within the Politburo. Following the election of Willy Brandt as chancellor of the FRG, a change was born. Brandt, as described by Soviet insider, Andrei Alexandrov-Agentov was a “man of crystal integrity, sincerely peace-loving, and with firm antifascist convictions who not only hated Nazism, but fought against it during the war.” These qualities made him endearing to Brezhnev and provided a foundation for amicable relations between the two men. Nonetheless, for Brezhnev many hurdles had to be cleared. The memories of his experience of the Second World War, the images of West Germany as a hotbed of revanchism, and his ideological commitment to Marxism, were difficult to overcome. Without the congeniality of Brandt and his engaging personality, perhaps Ostpolitik would never have emerged as a feasible geopolitical movement, which could have had damaging ramifications for peace.

Early in 1968, head of the KGB, Yuri Andropov had sent journalist Valery Lednev and KGB officer Vyacheslav Kevorkov to Bonn in order to set up a back-channel between West Germany and the Soviet Union. Gromyko spoke of the “necessity to dig a tunnel in the rock from both sides simultaneously and do it in such a manner that both sides will ultimately meet each other.” Following the invasion of Czechoslovakia, this back channel was activated. Prior to that point, the Soviet leadership was divided and remained uneasy over Bonn’s refusal to recognize Poland’s Western border and it felt threatened by a perceived rise in Neo-Nazism and

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140 Vladislav Zubok, Failed Empire, pg 211.
141 Vyacheslav Kevorkov, Tainiy Kanal, pg. 62.
142 M.E. Sarotte, Dealing with the Devil, pg. 34-35.
revanchism. Germany’s membership in NATO and the presence of American forces continued to cause consternation. Brezhnev waited for Brandt to make the first move.

On November 19, 1969, Brandt sent a letter to Kosygin proposing an open exchange of opinions between Bonn and the Soviet Union. Brezhnev was quick to reciprocate and by December 2, 1969 meetings between Egon Bahr and KGB contact Lednev were established. Contact between Brandt and Brezhnev continued throughout the year 1970 as Egon Bahr travelled back and forth from Moscow to Berlin. By July 12, 1970 Brezhnev outlined prospects for improving bilateral relations between Moscow and Bonn. On August 12, 1970, a nonaggression pact between West Germany and the Soviet Union was concluded in Moscow. Another treaty, with Poland, cemented the territorial arrangements of the Second World War. Nonetheless, the general populace and the surrounding Warsaw Pact countries were not sold. In October of 1970, political officers were sent to sample and aggregate public opinion data on the recent opening of negotiations with West Germany. The reports suggested that the general mood of the public remained mixed. Some people continued to see the recent renunciation of territorial claims in Poland as a “diplomatic maneuver by the FRG to mask its revanchist tendencies.” Nonetheless, talks between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic of Germany continued.

Agreements pressed forward in both the diplomatic and economic arenas. Economically, the Soviet Union failed to keep up with the industrialization efforts of capitalist countries. The unprecedented volume of growth that gripped the Soviet economy from 1947-1965 had subsided

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and the regime looked for additional investment opportunities abroad.\textsuperscript{144} In talks to the Yugoslavia ambassador, Brezhnev revealed details about a large-scale project for gas pipelines in 1971. Writing about it, Veljko Mucunovic said that “Brezhnev envisioned that this would create a long-term material foundation for lasting peace.”\textsuperscript{145} This was followed by private meetings held in Crimea from September 16-18 1971. Brezhnev entertained Brandt personally at the state dacha located in Oreanda. During the meeting, the two worked on a wide range of issues, establishing agreements on a bilateral commission on economic and scientific cooperation. A spirit of “mutual affection and trust hovered over everything.”\textsuperscript{146} Brezhnev and Brandt got along well and the overall impressions of the meeting were very positive.\textsuperscript{147} Headway continued to be made and on March 20, 1972 Moscow approved resettlement requests for Russian-German citizens. This could have potentially paved the way for further immigration and travel between the two countries. On May 17, 1972, the Bundestag ratified Eastern treaties which outlined the steps toward implementing the treaty of August 12, 1970. In September 1972, the first session of the Bilateral Commission was held. Talks of expanding economic discussions continued. By November 1\textsuperscript{st}, 1972 the FRG general consulate was opened in Leningrad. In an article in Pravda, Yevgeniy Grigoriev concluded that the “horizon has brightened” on German-Soviet relations. Finally, on December 21, 1972 the Basic treaty was signed between the FRG and the GDR renouncing unification as a formal goal between the two parties. Speaking, Brezhnev claimed that the main accomplishment of the negotiation was that the “West German government and the great majority of its people acknowledge the impossibility of altering the

\textsuperscript{144} Mike Bowker, “Brezhnev and Superpower Relations,” in Brezhnev Reconsidered


\textsuperscript{146} Quoted directly from the remembrances of Alexandrov-Agentov in Ot Kollantia.

\textsuperscript{147} Details of the meeting can be found in the Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (AVPRF) f. 757, op 17, por. 15 papka 98, list 7. “Otnosheniy SSSR s FRG.”
results of the Second World War.” However, despite the continued feel-good nature of the meetings, doubts surfaced among the general populace and members of the Politburo.

Despite the evident headway in Soviet and West German relations, doubts began to creep in over the sluggish nature of the negotiations. Among party discussions, questions arose about the motives of the delays. Some members openly speculated whether “it was possible that the FRG has the same goals that the leaders of the third Reich pursued before WWII.” Reports from local CPSU organizations demonstrated that the fears harbored by the populace in 1970 had not abated. Brezhnev attempted to allay fears by selling Brandt as a man who escaped from Nazi Germany in order to fight against the Third Reich in the Norwegian Army. But even Brezhnev himself became frustrated and impatient by FRG industrialists slowness to promote large-scale projects in Siberia and the lack of concrete resolution on the issues of East and West German unification. Initial plans to supply the FRG with 120 billion cubic meters of gas in exchange for wide-diameter pipes, machines, and equipment for the construction of a cross-country gas pipeline were scrapped. By January 1973 perceptions among the Soviet elite reflected negatively upon Brandt. In the first weeks of 1973, the Soviet Foreign Ministry reappraised Brandt’s policy and produced a memorandum claiming the existence of neo-Nazi tendencies in his policy. Fear continued that negotiations would bring the FRG and GDR closer together. By 1974, Brandt was forced to resign and this was a serious blow to both Leonid Brezhnev and Soviet-German relations.

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150 Ibid, pp. 32-37.
Despite marginal successes in the diplomatic field, negotiations between the USSR and Bonn failed to reach their full potential. Both sides remained rigid in their approach and commitment to preceding dogma. Internal divisions over policy toward Germany were visible amongst members of the Politburo. Conservative forces headed by Marshal Grechko of the Soviet military, resisted the progression of rapprochement. Likewise, within the Bonn government, opposing party members accused Brandt of selling out and detested his acceptance of the territorial status quo. These competing tensions created vacillation in policy and furthered mistrust. Brezhnev himself remained divided on the question of Germany. For a man whose most formative experiences consisted of resistance to German encroachment, it was difficult to renounce preceding biases. While on one hand he undoubtedly desired peace, he feared a reemergence of a stronger and more powerful Germany. Furthermore, the geopolitical ramifications of the negotiations were also difficult to ignore. In order to strike the appropriate chord of compromise, concessions had to be made. And yet neither side wanted to make them for fear of appearing weak and mitigating their strategic position. Ultimately, rapprochement and the advantages it promised failed to fulfill the full ambitions of its most active drivers.

The historical experience of the Second World War proved both a valuable facilitator and a central impediment to the progression of Ostpolitik and détente more broadly. By witnessing the great sacrifices that were borne by the Soviet people, Brezhnev placed one objective above all others in his foreign policy agenda: the pursuit of peace. Brezhnev believed that “the most important and the most urgent task [was] the preservation of peace, and the prevention of war.” Speaking at the Helsinki Conference in 1975, Brezhnev stated the “historical significance of

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151 Michael Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West*, Also for role of the military in resisting Détente, see Georgi Arbatov, *The System*, pg. 189.
152 L.I. Brezhnev, *Pages from his Life*, pg. 11.
the conference is especially clear to the people who belong to the generation that experienced the horrors of the Second World War.” 153 For him the normalization of relations with the FRG was one of the most important developments in Europe’s post war history. It would pave the way for a century of peace. 154 In a similar fashion, Ostpolitik presented West Germany with an opportunity to reconcile with its Nazi past and the experiences of the Second World War. In a private letter on the subject of Ostpolitik, Willy Brandt wrote that the questions which were raised off the German people during the Second World War could “find their ultimate answers only in a European peace arrangement,” and reconciliation with the countries of Eastern Europe. 155 The memory of the Second World War influenced the outlook of both politicians toward peace. And this mutual inclination toward peace initially superseded the distrust that existed between the Soviet Union and the FRG. However, it was also the legacy of the Second World War which prevented Ostpolitik from reaching its full potential. Both within the populace and the Politburo, suspicions arose concerning the nature of Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik. Internal bulletins on public opinion revealed a populace that remained skeptical of Ostpolitik. 156 Likewise, members of the Politburo could not shake off the memory of the “bloody past.” 157 As talks slowed down, party members began to debate the objectives of the FRG. Many drew comparisons to the leaders of the Third Reich. Internal reports revealed that the fears harbored after the Second World War did not disappear. Neither party could overcome the weight of its own war experience.

153 Ibid, pg. 204-205.
154 Quoted from Alexander Bovin’s XX Vek Kak Zhizn, pg 256-257.
Embracing Peace: Poster Art

The 1970s brought a more clearly refined objective for the Soviet Union. By pursuing a strategy of Ostpolitik with West Germany, the Brezhnev leadership hoped to create an environment which was more conducive to peaceful coexistence. This manifested most directly in the poster art of the early 1970s. For years, the Soviet Union chose to project itself as a country surrounded by hostile and aggressive capitalist countries. Therefore, it was difficult to justify the emergence of détente. Yet, in order to accommodate shifting geopolitical imperatives, the regime changed direction. Whereas, international hostility toward the USSR and its allies remained a constant theme in poster art, the Soviet Union’s objectives were displayed quite differently.

The Soviet citizen was consistently displayed demanding peace. This often took the form of a woman and child, but there were also associations between sport and peace, and the Soviet soldier and peace. The peace program was promoted heavily by the regime during this period and it was looked upon quite favorably by the people of the Soviet Union—especially by those who experienced the war firsthand.

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158 Images of this type date back to the Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent civil war. Poster Art is rampant with the portrayal of a Soviet Russia beleaguered by aggressors. Often the opposition was projected in the form of eagles, spiders, snarling dogs, birds, and spiders. For more see Graeme Gill, Symbols and Myths. Pg. 26-88.

159 The most interesting images concerning international aggression toward the Soviet Union appear in images related to the American war in Vietnam. See Baburina, Soviet, poster number 144.
Figure 17. “We Need Peace,” by M.V. Gromyko, www.russianposter.ru
Created by cartoonist, M.V. Gromyko in 1973, *Figure 17*, utilized a very emotional charged and poignant symbol to present its message. The words at the bottom of the page read, “We need peace.” It was a very simply constructed and clear-cut poster. By using two women and a child, the image created a very personal connection with its viewer. Women and children were ubiquitously used in peace propaganda in order to inspire emotional relationships. Moreover, because the protection of women and children was seen as a vital component of the preservation of civilization, the cartoonist made a value statement on behalf of Soviet society. Within Soviet society, the pursuit of peace was universally championed as a legitimate pursuit. As evidence, the same message is written at the bottom right of the page in Uzbek. This showcased the pervasive nature of the goal which the cartoonist advocated for.

As *Figure 18* reveals, the Soviet population was willing to fight for the pursuit of peace. The image produced in 1971 at the height of peace talks and optimism over Ostpolitik showed a Soviet man fighting an aggressor with a sign in his hand. A white “x” effaces out the picture of a bomb in the background. At the bottom the words read the “will of the people toward peace will not be broken.” The message was clear: peace was worth fighting for. And by 1972, the poster art revealed that the promise of peace was attainable. *Figure 19*, directly addressed the amelioration of tension between the USSR, West Germany, and the United States. In the image, the sun represented the peace program of the Soviet Union. Its rays thawed out the tank and the umbrella held by the soldier in it, abrogating their effectiveness. The words on the umbrella read “Cold War.” Likewise, at the bottom of the page the message stated “year by year the global weather gets warmer and warmer.” For the cartoonist, the trajectory of global relations headed toward lasting peace. The image spoke of the optimism and enthusiasm which existed among the Soviet populace toward the new peace initiatives.
Figure 18. "People's Will" via www.russianposter.ru
Figure 19. "Its Getting Warmer Year by Year" by M.A. Abramov www.russianposter.ru
For the regime, poster art represented the most expedient and efficient mechanism for massively circulating its vision in foreign policy. Because the posters were easy to produce and proliferate, they were mobilized rapidly in order to reflect the position of the regime. In the beginning of the 1970s, this position revolved around the promise of peace. Furthermore, it was deeply informed by the Soviet experiences of the Second World War. Most Soviet citizens remembered quite lucidly how horrible the war was. Therefore, by projecting Soviet policy as consistent with peace, the Soviet Union expected to mobilize the citizenry behind its policy of Ostpolitik and Détente. And it did.

**Conclusion**

The 1970s saw a shift in the political objectives of the Soviet Union. Within this movement, the peace agenda came into prominence—much more so than at any other point in Brezhnev era. And just as the objectives of the political leadership changed, so did the projection of the Second World War. As represented through cinema and poster art, cultural productions accommodated the viewpoints of the regime and reflected the wishes of the political elites. With the progression of Ostpolitik and Détente, peace messages intensified within the cultural sphere. Images of the German enemy were rehabilitated to reflect a new geopolitical envisioning. Even the manner by which the war itself was represented changed in order to reflect a deeper emphasis upon the brutalities of combat and the struggles associated with it. This shift was profound and deep and would reach a crescendo with the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975.
Conclusion: Believing the War Cult

We cannot list their noble names here,
There are so many of them under the eternal protection of granite.
But know this, those who regard these stones:
No one is forgotten, nothing is forgotten!

--Olga Berggolts, Poet and Leningrad Blockade Survivor

It might seem unique that the collective memory and the experience of the Second World War continued to play such a strong role in Soviet society during the 1960s and 1970s. After all, more than twenty years had passed since the signing of the Potsdam Agreement, which officially concluded the Second World War. Part of the explanation remains rooted in the magnitude of the engagement. Every facet of Soviet society conspired to halt the Fascist advance and protect their country from annihilation. But another element, which cannot be discounted, reflected a much more personal longing on behalf of veterans, survivors, and widows, to see the war’s prominence restored at the societal level. Under the Stalin and Khrushchev era, participants of the war felt marginalized as “remembrance rituals were moments of quiet reflection on part of war widows and veterans,” who privately attempted to reconcile their experiences of the past with their daily realities.\textsuperscript{160} Such recollections were relegated to the private sphere.

The Brezhnev regime gave individual veterans a voice by aggregating their narratives into one unified experience. For the first time, veterans were actively encouraged to tell their stories in order to distill the lessons of patriotism and heroism they had acquired through their

\textsuperscript{160} Catriona Kelly, \textit{Retreat from Dogmatism}, pg 261
wartime experiences. Stories of the war were at once deeply personal and profoundly political. The success of the state’s narrative stemmed from its ability to “deftly appropriate the everyday memory of survivors.”\textsuperscript{161} The real and unvarnished memory of participants was skillfully integrated into the narrative in a way, which explicated the pervasive appeal of the War Cult. And even though the war impacted every individual differently, the wide-ranging nature of the war ensured that everyone could recognize their own war experiences within a larger subset of the war myth created by the state. Therefore, even individual veterans who were skeptical of the state’s myth often internalized and embraced it anyways because they found recourse in the plurality of shared struggle. This endowed them with a degree of equanimity and a sense of belonging. In short, through the construction of public commemorations, cinematic productions, and artwork, the Brezhnev regime provided war survivors with a conduit for achieving emotional catharsis.

At the same time, it is important to note that this does not diminish the state’s involvement in the formation of the War Cult. While the “top-down” promotion of cultural values was not a seamless endeavor, which occurred devoid of popular support, the so-called fusion between the state’s myths and the real memories of survivors developed within the auspices of the state. By controlling and regulating the cultural productions of the time period, the State ensured that the symbols and myths that the populace was exposed to directed them toward the appropriate overarching narrative. In essence, the individualized narratives, which were created about the war, were streamlined in a manner conducive to state interests. Obviously there were variations within the narrative, and war cult itself was not monolithically imposed.

\textsuperscript{161} Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” \textit{American Historical Review} 102 (1997)
But the interpretations that individual people reached about the war were first and foremost shaped by the regime. The regime set the framework, and the individuals filled in the details.

However, a far more complex case about the regime itself needs to be made. Within the political elites and the bureaucracy there was hardly any unanimity about the war. Most members of the Politburo experienced the war in some capacity. So although, the focus of the paper hinges largely upon the political dynamics of the War Cult and the way by which it was shaped by developments outside the sphere of Soviet society, the promotion of the War Cult was itself much more complex. Just as Lisa Kirshenbaum questions the traditional discourse which emphasizes the disjunction between raw memory and state myths, it is perhaps appropriate to push the umbrella further and question the monolithic nature of the Soviet state itself.\(^\text{162}\) Such analysis is of course better reserved for future ventures, but it goes without saying that individual actors within the Politburo found themselves in disagreement in the manner by which the war was commemorated. So although the state played an integral role in shaping the manner by which the populace remembered the war, the “top-down” interpretation requires more work than I could have accomplished based on the source material. I acknowledge the problem readily and wish I could have incorporated a more nuanced interpretation of the Politburo itself within this paper.

In assessing the effectiveness or the believability of the War Cult, it is important to keep in mind the limitations of the procedure. Without access to polling data and large collections of personal memoranda, I find it difficult to quantifiably reach a conclusion in favor or against the War Cult and the success by which it shaped popular opinion. Therefore, I attempted not dwell too thoroughly on it throughout the paper. However, it bears questioning nonetheless. War, as the

psychiatrist Derek Summerfield points out, “is a public and collective experience, leaving memories which can be described as social as much as personal.” So it is best to think of the state-promoted narrative of the war neither as a myth nor a falsehood—which is connotatively implied by the term myth. Often in times of chaotic, painful, and unmanageable recollections, it becomes almost impossible to construct a unified plot from the memories that exist. Therefore, the War Cult is better interpreted as a shared story. By virtue of the nature of the experiences, a simplified, dramatized narrative can “confirm but also construct the memories of men who fought but did not write about their wars because it endows the incoherence of war with order and meaning.” One of course can debate the accuracy of the War Cult and the myth which was created around it. However, it becomes increasingly clear from limited interviews with survivors—as clear as it gets given the methodological problems associated with the source material—that the distilled narrative of the regime fit very concisely into the personal recollections of individual survivors. Whether this is evidence of the regime’s ability to influence the interpretations of the war or merely a testament to its ability to appropriate real and unvarnished memory is a point which begs further exploration.

163 Derek Summerfield, “The Social Experience of War and Some Issues for the Humanitarian Field,” in Rethinking the Trauma of War (London Free Association 1998) pg. 22.
164 Samuel Hynes, Personal Narratives, pg. 207.
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