

The Woman Question at Tashkent and World Socialist (Women's) Cinema

Providing a telling illustration of treatment of gender and sexuality within the cultural space of the Tashkent festival was the much-publicized opening film of its 1978 edition, *Veil* (*Parandzha*, 1978), by Malik Kaiumov. This five-minute documentary, with no voice-over, dedicated to women's emancipation in Soviet Uzbekistan juxtaposes the idyllic ordinary life of fully liberated (and strikingly beautiful) women in contemporary Tashkent with the footage of the *hujum*, the Soviet "assault" on the traditional way of life in Central Asia of the 1920s and 1930s. The traditional practices the *hujum* attempted to eradicate included polygamy, arranged marriages, and *kalym* (the bride dowry), but in Uzbekistan, in particular, it became synonymous with its violent and traumatic (but ultimately unsuccessful) unveiling campaign. The societal backlash to the women activists who joined the unveiling campaign cost them harassment, physical assault, and at times their lives.¹ Through an extended focus on the documentary records of that period, the film brings to the fore the troubled history of women's emancipation in Soviet Central Asia.

Kaiumov was Uzbekistan's most celebrated documentarian, with a long and illustrious career that included working alongside Roman Karmen and Azhdar Ibragimov in Vietnam and shooting films (which ranged from official newsreels to feature documentaries) in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Burma, Iran, Iraq, Algeria, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Sudan. He was the president of the Union of Filmmakers of Uzbekistan and the head of the republic's Documentary Film Studio; as such, he was a key member of the Soviet Central Asian elite and served as a major force of cultural diplomacy, representing the region to the rest of the world, as well as specifically mediating between the Soviet Union and the Global South. A committed communist, as well as a practicing Muslim (he even managed to go

on a hajj to Mecca in the 1960s), Kaiumov often focused in his films on Islamic cultural heritage and its preservation, both in the USSR and abroad.²

Veil, which Kaiumov claimed to be his favorite out of his sixty-year-long career, earned him the top prize at the Leipzig festival that year.³ At Tashkent, the film earned much praise from reviewers and fellow participants from India, Bangladesh, Niger, and Algeria as the most affecting and relevant cinematic experience that year. All of them claimed the relevance of the film and, by extension, of women's emancipation as integral to their own national independence struggles.⁴ Not only did the film posit Soviet Uzbekistan as a model modern (socialist) society, but by gesturing toward the moment of the (post)revolutionary liberation struggles as an originary site of women's emancipation, which was particularly legible within the various postcolonial contexts, *Veil* and many other similar films at the festival allowed for a further sense of ideological and political unity vis-à-vis the woman question.

Indeed, the condemnation of onscreen sexuality at Tashkent, discussed in the previous chapter, should not lead us to assume that the topic of women's emancipation was similarly dismissed. To the contrary, women's experiences were central to a large number of films screened at the festival and were repeatedly foregrounded in the festival reviews. In the context of Asian and African cinema in particular, the degree of women's emancipation from the traditional patriarchal order became a litmus test of progress and a pivot point for envisioning the alliance of "progressive" Islam and socialism. Central Asian cinema in this context occupied a position as an intermediary between Soviet and postcolonial models of the treatment of gender and sexuality, and the Tashkent festival—in both its cinematic projections and cultural practices—embodied a space of mediation between these divergent but intersecting models. Set against both traditional patriarchy and contemporary Western "bourgeois" feminism, it offered a distinctly socialist understanding of women's emancipation, attuned to specific cultural and social conditions that by the 1970s had become visibly uneven across the Soviet republics.

This chapter demonstrates the degree to which gender discourses, practices, and representational modes at Tashkent were consistent with international women's diplomacy of the 1970s—providing an additional context, which clarifies the logic of alliances between the socialist bloc and Third World women's movements. Yet Tashkent's distinctive mode of dealing with gender ultimately underscores the increasing divergences of the social realities and shifting ideologies of late socialism and the internationalist models embodied by the festival. The fissures and internal contradictions were nowhere more explicit than in the works of socialist women filmmakers. Thus, the chapter concludes with a consideration of women's cinema that was largely excluded from Tashkent's selections—as exemplified by the work of Assia Djebar, Larisa Shepitko, and Lana Gogoberidze—as a limit case of world socialist cinema. With the reading of these directors' films, the book makes a dialectical transition from its focus on the specific dynamics

of cinematic networks, movements, and individual participants that crystallized around the Tashkent festival to broader questions of generic formations within world socialist cinema.

PARANDZHA AND THE WOMAN'S QUESTION
IN SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA

Kaiumov's film offers a particularly telling entry point into the issues of women's liberation as seen from the perspective of a shared Soviet and Afro-Asian cultural space. The film uses original footage from the 1920s and 1930s, much of it allegedly shot by Kaiumov himself, who started working as an assistant cameraman in Uzbekistan in 1929 and, throughout the 1930s, was the Central Asian correspondent for the Soviet newsreel agency *Soiuzkinokhronika*.⁵ In addition to conventional images of public marches in support of the *hujum* and women taking off and even burning their veils (cinematic representations familiar to viewers of Dziga Vertov's *Three Songs about Lenin* [*Tri pesni o Lenine*, 1934]), the film includes shockingly gruesome footage (including close-ups of mutilated bodies) documenting the violence suffered by women who participated in unveiling campaigns, to whose memory the film is dedicated. The historical footage is evidently a mix of original documentation and later reconstructions presented without any commentary or identifications: for local audiences, some of the faces on the screen would have been familiar, such as the iconic images of Tojikhon Shadieva, an early Communist Party activist in the *hujum* and an editor of the Uzbek women's magazine *New Woman*. For viewers unfamiliar with this history, the historical footage hardly adds up to a coherent narrative, presenting instead a highly emotionally charged and often shocking sequence of images connoting different aspects of emancipation of Muslim women.

The juxtaposition between "then" and "now" on which the film is constructed is anything but subtle, underscored by changes in the music and the vibrant colors of the contemporary footage (which includes women not only unveiled but breastfeeding in front of the camera—as well as working a variety of jobs, studying, and teaching) in contrast to the black-and-white historical imagery. Halfway through the film, however, the clear division between the lyrical music accompanying the images of contemporary women and the dramatic electronic soundtrack of the struggles of the past gets disrupted and blurred. It happens at the moment when a photograph featuring Nadezhda Krupskaiia (Lenin's wife, one of the leaders of the Women's Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Zhenotdel, and an ideologue of Soviet antireligious education) surrounded by two young unveiled Uzbek women, which we initially see as part of the footage of the 1930s, reappears in the segment depicting contemporary reality, with the past directly entering the present, as it were. In the new segment, set in contemporary times, the photograph is being shown to the younger generation of

women by the original participants of these historical events—part political education, part memory-sharing. Although she is never identified in the film, the older woman showing the photograph of herself with Krupskaiia is evidently Asiia Faizova—who as a young woman was delegated to the 1936 Komsomol Congress in Moscow, subsequently becoming a Russian-Uzbek translator at the Pedagogical Institute in Fergana, eventually leading its department of Marxism-Leninism, having defended her thesis on the topic of the role of the cultural programs of the Communist Party in the women's emancipation movement in Uzbekistan.⁶

On the surface, this repeated visual emphasis on Krupskaiia underscores the role of the Soviet leadership in the process of liberating the women of Uzbekistan—both “then” and “now”—a common trope of Soviet discourses of the time. Yet the actual history of Krupskaiia and Zhenotdel's involvement in the unveiling campaign is considerably more complicated. As Anne McShane recently argued, Zhenotdel's position on the *hujum* differed considerably from the rest of the Soviet party leadership, and Krupskaiia famously publicly argued against mass unveiling in 1928, warning (unsuccessfully) precisely against the kind of violent backlash that would turn women activists into martyrs. She was advocating instead for gradual change and support of women-only clubs and cooperatives that would provide a protective environment for women, as part of Zhenotdel's program.⁷ By 1936, when the photograph of Krupskaiia with Faizova was taken, Zhenotdel no longer existed, having been dissolved by party leadership. And within a year, many of the local women activists who were actively campaigning for unveiling (including Shadieva, whose face we see in the historical footage part of *Veil*) would be sent to prison camps as part of Stalinist purges, to be rehabilitated only in the late 1950s.⁸ By pivoting on the image of Krupskaiia, the film therefore both reveals and conceals the complex relationship between women's experiences of liberation movements in Uzbekistan and the official Soviet iterations of this history. Kaiumov's choice to provide no commentary whatsoever in his film, with only musical accompaniment providing cues to the audience—making it function in part as an homage to the earlier era of cinema referenced in the film, and in part as a poetic reflection on the mediated past and present of Soviet cinema's mediation of women's images—produces the kind of historical ambiguity that could function strategically to enable *Veils* accessibility in multiple cultural contexts.

One thing remains unambiguous: as Kaiumov's film and its reception demonstrate, the emphasis on women's status was constructed, rhetorically and cinematically, as one of the key indicators of the progress of socialist modernity. In the Soviet context, this issue was nowhere as relevant as in Central Asia, particularly in regard to Islam. As the headquarters of the Central Asian muftiate (SADUM), Tashkent was the official center of Soviet Islam, and the festival's history coincides with the period of “strictly controlled cooperation” between Soviet and Islamic authorities in Uzbekistan (following Khrushchev's short-lived attempts at their eradication).⁹ Thus, even beyond general Marxist ideas on gender, demonstration

of improvement in the status of women in Central Asia was crucial for international diplomacy, implicitly positing the possibility of harmonious coexistence of socialism and progressive Islamic culture in Asia.

But regardless of the ethnic or religious origins of their (almost exclusively male) directors, Central Asian films screened at the festival constructed the problem of women's emancipation as that of their integration into the public sphere, promoting it as concomitant with socialist progress. Indeed, even by the late 1970s, in the Soviet East women's participation in the public sphere continued to present particular challenges that alluded to larger problems of socialist modernization of its Central Asian republics. And the historical traumas generated by these processes were especially identified with Uzbekistan, where harsh unveiling campaigns took place in the 1920s and 1930s, as depicted in Kaiumov's film.

As Gregory Massell famously argued, *the hujum* for the Soviets functioned as a substitute for the revolutionary politics of the (largely nonexistent) working class in Central Asia.¹⁰ In the absence of a proletariat to spur a revolution, the emancipation of women was treated as a conduit to the fundamental reorganization of social and political life, creating a passage toward achieving "a new socialist consciousness in everyday life."¹¹ The legacy of this approach is legible in the way gender issues were treated—discursively and cinematically—at the Tashkent festival, with its continuous emphasis of aligning "woman's fate" with the fate of socialist modernization, not only in broad ideological terms but also specifically through their entry in the labor force.¹² But just as within the post-Bandung decolonial parlance "the fate of the nation" was understood to be advanced by the people themselves, women were represented as active agents of their emancipation—whether in terms of their public participation (as artists or revolutionary combatants) or in their rejection or renegotiation of traditional family roles (except for motherhood, which, for obvious reasons, remained nonnegotiable). In religious contexts, this could mean a radical rejection of religion or a (re)negotiation between tradition and progress. But despite this emphasis on individual agency, women's liberation was therefore framed not as a subjective experience but in terms of the changes in social, communal, religious, or family affiliations. And this understanding of gender politics, while particularly paradigmatic for the Soviet case, resonated across the cinematic cultures represented at Tashkent, just as it did elsewhere in the socialist world. Together with mass literacy and education, the equal social status of women and men demarcated a break between the prerevolutionary period and the progress brought about by socialism. Progressive political development was presented as an inseparable condition of women's emancipation, and vice versa, with the main focus placed on economic and political equality, thus conceptually keeping it largely separate from issues of sexuality.

Of course, even within the socialist bloc the actual policies toward gender and sexuality varied a great deal, both historically and nationally. In the Soviet case, they went from the exceptionally progressive Soviet 1920s—when not only men

and women were granted equal rights but marriage and divorce were bureaucratically simplified, children born outside of marriage were granted full recognition, abortion was legalized, and homosexuality was decriminalized—to the reversal of most of these policies in the 1930s and 1940s. After Stalin's death and following the transformations of the labor force caused by the war, the Soviet state rearticulated its position on a number of issues related to gender, sexuality, and reproduction. For example, abortion became legal again, but male homosexuality was mercilessly persecuted. Eastern European countries followed different patterns: in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, for example, homosexuality was decriminalized in the 1960s, while East Germany in some ways was more in line with Western Europe, legalizing abortion only in the early 1970s but also adopting much more liberal views on nudity and homosexuality in media, as long as they were rendered as personal experiences and not linked to social movements.¹³ This particular understanding of the differentiation between the personal and the political as subordination of gender issues to broader political struggles has also been at the center of much contemporary feminist criticism of both militant Third World movements and state socialism.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DIPLOMACY BETWEEN SECOND AND THIRD WORLDS

The ideological consensus on how to understand women's liberation among the male-dominated discussions at Tashkent mirrored the women-centered international diplomacy of that period. Indeed, within official Soviet state ideology, gender equality in legal and economic terms was considered central to both the festival's policies and its identity, nationally and internationally. The figure of Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut, served as a key signifier in Soviet cultural diplomacy all over the world as an embodiment of the triumph of socialist modernity, perfectly combining its cultural and technological advancements.¹⁴ And despite vast differences in the conditions for women and problems facing them in the Third World, throughout the postwar period women's movements in the socialist bloc were strong allies of women representatives from Asia, Africa, and Latin America on the intrastate level, such as the UN. For them, women's issues were inseparable from larger political and economic problems. Within the UN, the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), founded by state socialist members, concentrated on disarmament and decolonization as issues crucial to women's freedom from violence and discrimination, with strong support of women representatives from the "developing nations."¹⁵ Positioning such broader political issues as central to the struggle for women's emancipation allowed for alliances and solidarity among these blocs, while at the same time creating major rifts among them and many Western feminists, especially those from the US.

This division became especially pronounced during the 1975 UN International Women's Year. Under the UN aegis, there was a two-week-long World Conference

on Women in Mexico City, which brought into the spotlight widely publicized conflicts abbreviated, catchily, to “Betty Friedan vs. the Third World.” The fundamental disagreement rested on the fact that the core group of US representatives at the conference (mostly consisting of white middle- or upper-class women) strongly fought to exclude “non-women related” political issues—especially Israel’s occupation of Palestine and Apartheid—from the center of their discussions. As Jocelyn Olcott explains in her analysis of the complexities behind both the perception and realities of what took place during the conference, “Through the mid-1970s, the non-aligned countries would link these two issues [Israel and Apartheid], branding Zionism as a form of racism and shifting the movement’s center of gravity from India and Indonesia to an alliance between Arab and sub-Saharan African countries that traded allegiances, giving the bloc ‘votes to dominate most aspects of UN activities, and to paralyze the rest, if they so choose.’”¹⁶

In this, the nonaligned bloc was consistently joined by the socialist women representatives. Following this path, the Third and Second World alliance at Mexico with regard to Palestine was more significant than the presumed gender-based solidarity. The US delegation and its allies were attacked for their attempts to focus only on their conception of women’s issues at the expense of discussions of geopolitics. Their single-mindedness on this issue made them an outlier at this international event, manifested most clearly in their refusal to sign the “Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace” (1975), to which they objected for its equation of “Zionism” with “racism” and “imperialism.”¹⁷ The Second- and Third-World women’s alliance, instead, insisted on inscribing women’s experiences within broader sociopolitical contexts, demanding, as Kristen Ghodsee underscores, actions on “issues of development, colonialism, racism, apartheid, imperialism, and the creation of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), which would radically redistribute the world’s wealth.”¹⁸

Seemingly remote from the debates and participants of the Tashkent festival, the conflicts between the alliance of Third World and socialist bloc women activists and their US and US-aligned counterparts bring to the fore the different configurations of gender politics on the two sides of the Cold War. The alliances and solidarities, which were highly visible on the diplomatic sphere, similarly found their manifestation in cinema, which comes out as well in roundtable discussions at Tashkent. A similar strategic politics prevailed there that manifested in Mexico City, with issues about Israel and apartheid advancing the broader Soviet positions in the global Cold War. Beyond such strategic deployment, it was indicative of a fundamentally different understanding of what constituted feminism—a term that was identified with Western women’s activism, or the “bourgeois” feminisms of the earlier period—in distinction to the legacy of radical women activists like Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg or of contemporary African, Asian, and Latin American women militants.

While Betty Friedan came to stand for the US side of this conflict at the conference, on the other side of the divide was Domitila Barrios de Chungara, a Bolivian

tin miner's wife who came to prominence through her on- and offscreen participation in *The Courage of the People* (*El coraje del pueblo*, Jorge Sanjinés, 1971), where she famously reenacted her own role as a housewife labor organizer during the 1967 army massacre of the miners. An activist for economic justice, Domitila was skeptical of any alliances with Western feminists and disdainful of their discourse on sexual rights (including those of sexual minorities), which she saw as antithetical to the economic and political rights for which she was struggling.¹⁹ She rejected the idea that questions of gender were articulated through sexuality—in as much as it was understood as belonging to the subjective and private sphere—but, instead, linked directly to social, economic, and political discourses of modernization and progress.

Domitila's role as an organizer of the Housewives' XX Century Committee, a women's organization that actively supported miners' unions, as well as acting on issues directly affecting women, in effect rejected the separation between the domestic and public working sphere.²⁰ Thus, many films dealing with the liberation and anti-imperialist struggles (as well as building socialism) placed emphasis on women's active contribution to these processes, whether through combat, industrial or agrarian labor, or domestic and affective work. In this context, women's domestic and affective labor was consistently represented as a form of resistance integrated into the fight for liberation and progress as manifested in the public sphere, not in opposition to or separate from it.²¹

By the 1960s, the actual legal and economic situation of women in the socialist bloc differed considerably from elsewhere in the world: abortion was legal everywhere in the Soviet bloc except East Germany by the late 1950s (although restrictions were introduced in many Eastern European countries in the late 1960s and early 1970s); women constituted a large part of the labor force across the class spectrum; paid maternity leaves were lengthy and guaranteed; childcare services were free; and the divorce rate (most frequently initiated by women) was the highest of anywhere outside the US.²² These gains did a lot to compel Third World women activists to see their socialist bloc counterparts as natural allies. At the same time, they were suspicious of white "bourgeois feminists" whose commitment to sexual politics was frequently seen as a sign of their class privilege, exacerbated by the fact that Western women's movements were increasingly organized through groups centered on specific identity formations.²³ Questions of desire or what we would now term queer sexuality—unlike those of rights of labor, including domestic or reproductive—did not intersect with the socialist productivist ethos, which was still predominant among most women activists from the socialist bloc and the Third World alike, while continuing to violate the more traditional cultural taboos, which were likewise still prevalent. In other words, it's not that the Western feminist slogan "the personal is political" did not resonate with socialist and Third-Worldist women activists; but for many of them "the personal" included such issues as abortion, childcare, or choice of vocation—but not sexual practices.

The discourses and representational models we see at Tashkent, then, are fully consistent with such a majoritarian position within official women's movements of both the socialist bloc and the Third World countries. Among such representational models, it is the melodramatic mode of many of the films screened at Tashkent that deserves particular attention for the way it mediated these complex gender issues across both socialist and postcolonial contexts.

MELODRAMA IN WORLD SOCIALIST CINEMAS

Disparaged as they were by the critics and filmmakers at the Tashkent round-table discussions, films that engaged the melodramatic mode at the festival were often the only ones that allowed for the most explicit exploration of gender politics. In these films, the dynamics of (heterosexual) desire—the romantic (sub)plot—still tend to form the narrative drive. But what makes them distinct is the way this desire tends to be folded into the story of larger progressive goals (whether of socialist modernization, anti-imperialist struggle, or revolutionary consciousness-raising), while allowing for its more explicitly sexual manifestations to remain within the private sphere (and therefore outside of the cinematic representational regime, as dictated by the logic discussed in the previous chapter). Thus, if Hollywood women-centered films, melodrama in particular, have focused on private and domestic spheres, the opposite tends to be true when we consider films in world socialist cinema, where such narrative devices as the choice of romantic partner were endowed with high stakes beyond the private realm, explicitly aligning the woman with ideological positions the films seek to advance. Within such narratives, women often serve as moral arbiters within the traditional community, thus bringing it to the side of social progress.²⁴ As an extension of this logic, women's suffering within the patriarchy often serves to catalyze not only her own but also the male hero's political awakening and transformation. In other, more explicitly woman-centered narratives, women protagonists become active agents of change, fighting the vestiges of the "old" regime of patriarchy, which is defined by the way it blocks progressive social and economic development.

A variation on this motif is the figure of the mother of a martyr—in line with a socialist-realist tradition of Gorky's famous novel, which was highly influential all over the world—whose personal loss (usually of a son) causes her political transformation. Grief and mourning, as well as melancholy, within traditional melodrama signal the withdrawal to the private subjective realm (whether of a romantic hero's—or heroine's—psyche or to the domestic space of the couple). In socialist melodrama, these affects are still significantly inscribed within the historical and communal order, but the specific role played by the public sphere or the state in the women's self-realization in this mode of representation can be unstable and highly variable, often amounting to a vague utopian horizon rather than an actual

inhabited space. Yet it is always rendered through social, communal, or political terms, not as the satisfaction of subjective desires, pleasures, or personal fulfillment.

These dynamics extend to many socially minded woman-centered (melo)dramas presented at Tashkent over the years. It applies to the handful of Algerian films shown in the Soviet Union that included female characters (as so many of them didn't): from the more traditional and melodramatic, as in Mohammed Lakhdar-Hamina's *The Wind of the Aurès* (*Rih al-Awras*, 1966), to more explicitly socially engaged films, such as Mohamed Slim Riad's *Wind from the South* (*Rih el Djanoub*, 1975), Merzak Allouache's *Omar Gatlato* (1976), or Sid Ali Mazif's *Layla and the Others* (*Layla wa-Akhawatuha*, 1978). Many of the films at Tashkent used melodrama to critique the socioeconomics of the traditional social order. Soviet critics were quick to justify melodrama as an effective framework for urging progressive social and cultural transformations: finding this at work in such a wide range of films as *Sergeant Bakary Woolen* (*Le sergent Bakary Woolen*, Mohamed Lamine Akin, Guinea, 1966), Oumarou Ganda's *The Polygamist's Morale* (*Le Wazzou polygame*, Nigeria, 1970), Ababacar Samb-Makharam's *Kodou* (Senegal, 1971), Omar Khelifi's *Screaming* (*Sourakh*, Tunis, 1973), Khan Ataur Rahman's *Be Human Again* (*Abar Tora Manush Ho*, Bangladesh, 1973), Sébastien Kamba's *Price of a Union* (*La rançon d'une alliance*, The Republic of Congo, 1974), Yilmaz Duru's *Honor Debt* (*Namus Borcu*, Turkey, 1974), and Hassan Tariq's *One More Sin* (*Eik Gunnah Aur Sahi*, Pakistan, 1975). Soviet critical analysis of these films tends to foreground their contestation of traditional gender politics—but in a way that is aligned with creating the hybrid modern state distinct from the liberal model, even in cases where such a state could hardly be called “socialist.”²⁵

GENDER POLITICS FROM THE SOVIET THAW TO LATE SOCIALISM

To position Tashkent's mediation of these issues within a transnational context of the 1970s, it is crucial to acknowledge the significant shift of the treatment of gender and sexuality, which took place in the late 1950s and early 1960s, resulting, among other things, in a bifurcation in the cinematic modes of representation between the Russophone center and the republics.

Although the Soviet Union arguably never experienced the “sexual revolution” as that phrase is understood in the Western context, the Soviet Sixties were nonetheless marked by continuous renegotiations of gender norms and sexual representations on the screen and off. The question of the legitimacy of libidinal desires and experiences independent of the greater ideological goals of building socialism was a subject of hot dispute in Soviet media, from questioning the moral character of the female protagonist of *The Cranes Are Flying* (*Letiat zhuravli*, Mikhail Kalatozov, 1957) to raging critical debates triggered by the high school romance *And What If It's Love?* (*A esli eto liubov'?*, Iulii Raizman, 1961).²⁶ As with

many other aspects of cultural life, the Thaw brought about considerable diversity of positions, possibilities, and imaginaries. But in this respect, the political shift, which took place in the Soviet bloc in 1968, had paradoxical consequences. Following the Prague Spring, the official culture promoted not a return to the militancy of earlier socialist policies but a “normalization” ethos that affirmed more traditional and normative treatments of gender: “the last two decades of state socialism were marked by an ambiguous mix of rising levels of female employment with only perfunctory repetitions of the importance of women’s equality, while traditional approaches of framing women as child-bearers came to the fore.”²⁷

Russophone Soviet cinema of the stagnation era mirrors this tendency, notably, through melodrama, which staged the continual renegotiation of issues of gender and, by focusing on private dramas, marked the growing ambivalence and estrangement from the Soviet social and political order. Unlike its earlier Soviet manifestations (and even the production of the other Soviet republics’ studios of the same period), melodrama in this context allowed for the detachment of the representation of love and sexuality from social and political relations in which they were officially embedded. While the latter still characterized the socialist women’s movements, in the course of the 1970s, Russophone Soviet cinema and television allowed for new discourses on gender to be articulated and performed.²⁸ The women’s struggle against patriarchy was depicted almost exclusively in the historical context of the revolution and war. Outside of that context women’s professional and economic emancipation tended to be either toned down or outright questioned. As the authors of *Film and Television Genres of the Late Soviet Era* describe, in Soviet melodrama, “by the 1970s . . . women’s individual self-realization becomes completely separate from the Soviet public sphere, which was usually presented as male-dominated, but simultaneously impotent and corrupt.”²⁹ Such affirmation of the private autonomous sphere of intimacy certainly produced a certain range of new cinematic and epistemological vocabularies for greater complexity and ambiguity of interpersonal and sexual experiences (within a strictly heteronormative framework), which had not been available in the past. Yet as a result, by the 1970s, Russophone Soviet cinema largely excluded any imaginary of a public sphere capable of seriously engaging with gender questions, increasingly legitimizing more conservative modes of conceptualizations of gender, femininity, and family relations.³⁰

This, however, was not the case with the cinemas of Central Asia and Azerbaijan. In these republics, the reality of cultural and labor assimilation of women into the public sphere was met with greater resistance, significantly lagging behind the northwestern parts of the country; and the post-Thaw cultural shift in their cinematic representations there did not follow the same trajectory.³¹ As such, they offered a model that was, indeed, considerably closer to its Asian and African counterparts, while still affirming a socialist paradigm of advancing women’s emancipation that was fully consistent with the official Soviet position. Much of

their cinematic production, as evidenced by the Tashkent selection, still focused on the role of women's liberation and integration into the public sphere and labor force as a marker of socialism's progress, with historical films centered on the Soviet modernization of the regions serving as a paradigmatic model.³²

GENDERED DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES AT THE FESTIVAL

Further manifesting the complexities and contradictions of gendered discourses and practices at Tashkent was a certain disconnect within a threefold relationship of women's actual participation in the historical liberation struggles, their representations on the screen, and the roles they were materially accorded in the cinemas shown at Tashkent. In other words, in many national cinemas represented at Tashkent, the historical women's roles within the liberation movements did not always find their manifestation on the screen, while the visibility of women's actual participation at the festival in some ways contradicted both. The festival site can therefore be seen as negotiating these tensions through its discourses and practices, with mixed results.

Most significantly, these contradictions were reflected in the fact that out of the hundreds of films shown at Tashkent, those made by women could be counted on one hand. Even greater gender imbalance was seen in public debates and discussions: the only woman who gave the main address at Tashkent during this whole period was Rano Abdullaeva, deputy minister of Uzbek republic and head of the Communist Party, and her address is indistinguishable from any other official festival greetings. Despite the fact that there were many distinguished women film critics in the USSR during that period—Maya Turovskaya, Neia Zorkaia, Kira Paramonova, Irina Smirnova, and Ianina Markulan, to name just a few—not a single one of them participated in the debates, and very few even got to cover the festival until the 1980s. This was in part representative of the division in the Soviet Union between critics who could write about international cinema—a much more ideologically controlled and, in some ways, elite group, privileged with trips abroad and interactions with foreigners—and the majority of critics and scholars, whose area was Soviet film. This hierarchy was, in turn, gendered, with men dominant in the elite group. Even given the official downgrading of the cinemas of Africa, Asia, and Latin America against “Western” ones or even the cinemas of the socialist bloc, male dominance still held. Moreover, the Soviet organization of cultural institutions with an international interface commonly reflected unspoken cultural stereotypes, so, for instance, while women could be tentatively included in the field of Latin American criticism (such as the art historian Inga Karetnikova, and the film scholar Tatiana Vetrova, who started writing in the early 1980s), it was assumed that Africans and Asians would not accept women in prominent cultural roles, thus justifying their exclusion. In Central

Asia, women were overall considerably slower in gaining access to the top echelons of cultural and cinematic institutions, even as they celebrated women being liberated into the public sphere.

There were, of course, many women participating in the festival—cultural workers, representatives of film institutions such as archives and museums, especially from the other socialist bloc countries, and some European journalists who were also guests of the festival. Female voices literally dominated the festival in live voice-overs that enabled film screenings to be translated into several languages, and these numerous women translators served a crucial role in mediating between the cinematic works and local audiences. This was often particularly challenging given the unusually demanding work conditions, with the lack of available dialogues, librettos, or sometimes even basic summaries of films they had to translate, multiplicity of languages, and long work hours—resulting in translators often having to improvise and rely on their wit and personal knowledge of cinema to make sense of the films to the audiences.³³ But while they were certainly audible, they also tended to stay “behind the scenes,” their labor and contribution to the festival left largely unacknowledged.

As a result, the most numerous and visible women at the Tashkent festivals from Asia, Africa, or Latin America were actresses, dancers, or singers, and their participation constituted a crucial cultural and ideological aspect of the festival. And in the Soviet press coverage, stars who represented Tashkent festival selections were awarded an unusual level of symbolic agency, agency that was constructed as simultaneously creative and political.

STARDOM AT TASHKENT

As discussed earlier, the participation of both socialist and Third-Worldist women in internationalist cultural diplomacy in other venues, from the UN to the publicity of space exploration, by the 1970s was in fact both commonplace and highly effective. When placed in the context of the Tashkent film festival, the Bolivian activist Domitila's role in international women's diplomacy emerges not as exceptional but as paradigmatic: *The Courage of the People* is a testimony to her own life of both domestic and public labor and activism. This dialectical understanding of labor extends to her role and direct participation in making that film, which in turn gave her further visibility on the activist circles, enabling international venues for her activism. As such, she could serve in many ways as a perfect model for a socialist understanding of stardom, and we will see reflections of this conception in the way many actresses were presented at Tashkent. Yet, like with many other aspects of the festival, this notion itself was simultaneously tempered by much more traditional notions of femininity.

We must go beyond the official record of roundtables to festival publicity and documentation, with images and newsreels of the festival, to make the gendering

and racialization of the period evident. One sees lots of older men in suits (these are mostly the Soviet and Asian directors and functionaries), younger hirsute men in suits, but with increasingly more bell-bottomed trousers, often holding cigars (Latin American and North African directors) and Black men in colorful tunics (the sub-Saharan African filmmakers). Typically, these men are surrounded by attractive young women dressed in colorful national costumes or fashionable attire (all actresses, regardless of origins). Many of these actresses were also singers or dancers. They became regular participants of the festival, forming long-lasting friendships with the Soviet filmmakers.³⁴

One of these star performers was Mexican folkloric dancer and musician Sonia Amelio. Amelio's career and star persona offer another example of the intersection of creative expression and public diplomacy: she was a major cultural ambassador of Mexico to the socialist bloc; an internationally celebrated dancer, pianist, and actress; the daughter of Salvador Amelio Garcia, the director of the state film distribution company Películas Nacionales; and wife of Luis de la Hidalga, the head of Cultural Affairs in the Secretary of External Relations of Mexico.³⁵ In the 1960s, Vladimir Obrubov, head of the Soviet film export agency in Mexico and Amelio Garcia's close friend (he was, among other things, one of the founders of the pro-Communist Party Partido Popular in the 1940s), helped arrange his daughter's tour of the Soviet Union, where her performances had great success and put her in close contact with some of the elites in Soviet artistic culture.³⁶ In 1967, after her cinematic debut in Emilio Fernández's *A Faithful Soldier of Pancho Villa* (*Un dorado de Pancho Villa*, 1967), she participated in the Moscow International Film Festival, and throughout the 1970s, she was a regular participant at all the major events related to Mexican cinema in the Soviet Union. As such, Amelio, together with popular Mexican actresses Susana Dosamantes and Alicia Encinas, was among the most visible guests of the 1974 edition of the festival, appearing in numerous photos as part of the festival coverage and fondly remembered by Soviet participants (figs. 5.1, 5.2).³⁷ While Mexican cinema in the 1970s, unlike its Indian or Egyptian counterparts, became increasingly "risqué" by the rigid Soviet norms with respect to depictions of sexuality and nudity, actresses-performers like Amelio represented the attractive side of both state-supported high and folkloric cultures, as well as popular audiovisual genres, and they contributed to the creation of a lively celebratory and informal atmosphere of the Tashkent gatherings discussed in chapter 1.

An emphasis on stardom may seem surprising for a festival that presented itself as an alternative to "Western bourgeois" commercial film festivals, with their red carpets and paparazzi. Tashkent's emphasis on socialist, decolonial, and anti-imperialist values seems ill-matched to star culture: wasn't the star system the very essence of Hollywood commodification of commercial studio filmmaking that politically progressive cinemas were strongly opposed to? While stardom was always a key feature of Soviet (and other state socialist) film cultures, with



FIGURE 5.1. Soviet director Kamil Iarmatov (Uzbekistan) with Mexican actresses Alicia Encinas (*left*) and Susana Dosamantes at the 1974 Tashkent festival. Photo from the author's private collection.

film magazines (both the popular magazine *Soviet Screen* and the critical journal *The Art of Cinema*) featuring regular articles and special issues on famous actors, its construction was not merely a reflection of the Hollywood model.³⁸ In fact, as Kristin Roth-Ey points out, criticisms of the “star industry,” the cornerstone of bourgeois cinema, were frequently voiced in Soviet film magazine articles about foreign stars; often, depending on the political sympathies of the star, the Soviet point of view focused on the ideological and artistic difficulties these actors encountered in a corrupt bourgeois film industry directed only at profit-making.³⁹ To distinguish acting within the socialist film industry, Chinese film discourses of the same period consistently referred to actors as “film workers.”⁴⁰ The Soviet press never went so far as to equate artistic labor to that of the proletariat; nonetheless, it foregrounded the process of actor training and preparation for the roles, long working hours and hardships, which had to be overcome during shootings. The press remarked on the actors’ creative evolution, their sense of responsibility and awareness of the high social mission of cinema, and their direct participation in the more conceptual aspects of filmmaking.⁴¹

In some ways, this was a legacy from the early days of Soviet film education from the 1920s onward: like many other film schools, VGIK was originally an actors studio, which, in distinction from similar European and American institutions, was



FIGURE 5.2. *Left to right:* Minakshi Anand (Nepal), Med Hondo (Mauritania), Sonia Amelio (Mexico), and Daredjan Chakhidze (Georgia) at the the 1980 Tashkent festival. Photo used by permission of Sputnik.

pervaded by the early Soviet film theory that accorded a large role to the actor, which in turn shaped Soviet film education at large.⁴² At VGIK, actors, just as other cineastes, became part of an in-depth multiyear specialized curriculum. Thus, discourses on acting from the very origins of the Soviet film apparatus were constructed in reference to education, working conditions, and individual professional and social growth more than the Hollywood-style gossip about the stars' private lives (although glimpses into their family histories or particular domestic talents were occasionally provided). Unlike Indian cinema of the 1930s and 1940s, where, as Neepa Majumdar argues, the private realm was segregated from the construction of the star persona owing to its negation as an “unacknowledged cultural force in public life,” the Soviet star system overemphasized the historical position

of cinema as integral to the constitution of its public culture—as an industry, a workplace, an educational endeavor, both in political and aesthetic aspects—not so much segregating the private realm from it as rendering it less relevant.⁴³ Instead, Soviet star discourse foregrounded the agency of actors and actresses, acknowledging their work as collaborative and productive labor. This further reinforced the understanding of cinema as embedded within a network of political, economic, and cultural forces and highlighted actors' interventions in them.

An awareness of the role of actors and actresses in international cultural diplomacy was fully consistent with such a view. And after the 1950s, Soviet policy makers began to realize that Soviet actors and actresses could serve as effective international cultural ambassadors. Afro-Asian film festivals were no exception: Masha Kirasirova describes a report by the Soviet ambassador in Indonesia in 1964 that suggested that the poor reception the delegation received at the Afro-Asian film festival in Jakarta that year was due at least to the fact that there was only one actress present, in contrast to earlier artistic delegations that were better endowed, including one with the beautiful actress Zinaida Kirienko, who, the report states, led to direct access to personal attention from Sukarno.⁴⁴ Soviet film actress Liudmila Chursina was featured on a 1965 cover of the Indian film journal *Filmfare*; she was one of only two foreign actresses bestowed with such an honor in the 1960s.⁴⁵ The high visibility of the actresses at the Tashkent festival reflects the awareness of such international publicity and points to the inevitable contradiction. If its goal was to create a more attractive and livelier social event while redressing the obvious gender imbalance, in doing so it instrumentalized an ornamental understanding of women performers. In contrast to star discourses outside the socialist sphere, the festival gave its fullest acknowledgment of their social impact and foregrounded their political agency; even so, in the absence of important female directors and critics, it nonetheless created obvious gendered divisions within the cultural spheres as represented at the festival.

A big part of the festival press coverage in the Soviet Union was its introduction of “new stars” from Asia, Africa, and Latin America to Soviet audiences. In part, this was a regular film publicity mechanism since many films shown at Tashkent were bought for wide release in the country. And because many actors and actresses participating at the festival were not (yet) familiar to local (Tashkent or Soviet) audiences, this was a conscious and unidirectional way of creating their star image for potential Soviet audiences, that is, publicity for their films. Moreover, both Soviet audiences and critics lacked background knowledge of the actresses' overall body of work. This situation was not uncommon in the Soviet Union, where coverage of foreign stars' careers in *Soviet Screen* very often referred to films that were inaccessible to the Soviet audience. In place of the films themselves, the audience read articles that summarized their plots and included stills, thus offering “viewers a kind of secondhand consumption experience, drawing them into an international cinematic imaginary otherwise unavailable.”⁴⁶ In the

case of African, Asian, and Latin American stars, however, film critics themselves were often at a loss for information beyond what festival participants would share with them. Thus, the context of any critical discussion was based almost entirely on observations of the films shown at the festival and the interviews actors took—even when some of the actresses (such as Pakistani Shamim Ara or Turkish Türgan Şoray) were superstars with extensive cinematic careers at home.

Without much access to their films, the Tashkent star personas for Soviet audiences were actively created on-site, framed within their immediate set of coordinates: their roles as cultural ambassadors, their own political commitments and experiences, their relationship to their respective social and cultural milieu. In interviews, the actresses were asked about progressive cinema in their home country, how they approached their choice of films, directors, topics, and types of characters they played. These interviews and articles emphasized how the stars were active agents in their industry, whose skills were shaped by personal and professional formation that reflected larger historical trends. These social forces explained the spectatorial identification of which they were the object, drafting them into the didactic and revolutionary purposes of progressive cinema, in which they played an important public role. The Soviet press introduced these Asian, African, and Latin American stars in terms consistent with the Soviet line on stardom, emphasizing the ethos of continuous cultural growth and development through work.

Thus, in festival coverage, the article about the two stars of Ousmane Sembène's *The Money Order* (*Mandabi*, 1968), Ynousse N'Diaye and Isseu Niang, both of whom participated in the festival (with Niang becoming a frequent participant), not only discussed their dresses, so exotic and unfamiliar to Soviet eyes, but dwelt on the fact that they could make their own clothes, which was demonstrated for the reporter at Tashkent when the two went out and bought Uzbek fabrics at the market in order to sew themselves new outfits within a few hours (fig. 5.3). The emphasis on this lack of an extended apparatus of film production (which, in the capitalist context, would include stylists and dressmakers) may appear condescending and orientalist; however, self-reliance and connections to manual labor were consistently celebrated in Soviet discourses. In fact, such DIY practices were common even in the financially constrained Soviet film production culture. The same article emphasized the fact that Niang spoke fluent French, English, and Italian, in addition to Wolof, and pointed out that N'Diaye earned her living from stenography while hoping to take the entrance exam for VGIK (while concluding with the predictable claim that both actresses enjoyed Central Asian films they saw at the festival the most).⁴⁷

Chieko Baisho, the star of several of Yoji Yamada's films featured at the festival, was introduced in an interview as the daughter of a tram driver and a singer best known for her song "Shitamachi no Taiyō" ("Sun over Shitamachi"), set in a working-class neighborhood of Tokyo. This proletariat context colored her roles in



FIGURE 5.3. Senegalese actresses Ynousse N'Diaye (left) and Isseu Niang in Tashkent. Photo from authors private collection.

“progressive” films, where the noticeable authenticity of her performance reflected her real experiences and her interest in the everyday lives of “simple working women.”⁴⁸

The press reports about the two most famous Bangladeshi actresses, sisters Shuchanda (Kohinoor Akhtar) and Babita (Farida Akhtar Poppy), who were also frequent guests at the festival in the 1970s, wove their life stories into the traumatic history of the War of Liberation. Shuchanda was the widow of Zahir Raihan, the communist director of *Stop the Genocide* (one of several of his films shown in the USSR), who had disappeared following the war. Thus, the frequent interviews with both Shuchanda and Babita always noted the background history of the people's resistance movement and the role that cinema in Bangladesh played in it, further emphasizing Raihan's participation in this history, even if the films Shuchanda and Babita presented at Tashkent were generally apolitical. Babita's experience of working with Satyajit Ray further legitimized her “realist” (and, therefore, progressive) credentials, and Shuchanda's emphasis on tragedy as her preferred cinematic mode as “best responding to the conditions of life for the people of Bangladesh” likewise endowed the folkloric romantic films in which she starred as the aura of political allegories or expressions of the spirit of the people in the face of historical trauma.⁴⁹ The reception of Magda in the Soviet bloc was defined by her role as Jamila Bouhired, the famous FLN guerilla fighter in Chahine's film, even

though her popularity with Soviet audiences, as well as elsewhere, derived from mainstream Egyptian melodramas. Her interviews emphasized her independence (she became an actress against her family's wishes) and her creative ambitions as a director (her directorial debut was widely screened in the Soviet Union after its premiere in Tashkent), as well as producer.⁵⁰

Similarly, the Turkish superstar Türkan Şoray, who, along with Fatma Girik, in the course of the 1970s became an increasingly visible presence at Tashkent, especially after the success of *The Girl with the Red Scarf* (*Selvi Boylum, Al Yazmalım*, Atif Yılmaz, 1977), an adaptation of Chingiz Aitmatov's short story, and a Turkish-Soviet coproduction *My Love, My Sorrow* (*Liubov' moia, pechal' moia/Bir aşk masalı: Ferhat ile Şirin*, Azhdar Ibragimov, 1978). Her acting career covered a wide range of roles, but what the Soviet press liked best was her ability to play the gentle and repressed "everyday woman" who, in the course of the dramatic arc, stands up against masculinist compliance with oppressive social, political, and economic structures. Her unusual control over her filming conditions (which became known in Turkey as Türkan Şoray Laws), which covered nonnudity clauses, fixed working hours, and choice of locations, was emphasized. Her box-office appeal from the start of her career enabled her to choose roles with socially and politically transgressive filmmakers. Her own directorial debut, *The Return* (*Dönüş*, 1972), won an award at the 1973 Moscow film festival, and Soviet film critics were keen to highlight all these aspects of her professional persona, which combined glamor and progressive political consciousness of women's rights onscreen and off.⁵¹

The star of *Kumari* (Prem Bahadur Basnet, 1977), screened at Tashkent in 1976, Chaitya Devi Singh began her acting career in Nepali's very first feature film, *Mother* (*Aama*, Hira Singh Khatri, 1964), an experience that convinced her that to promote the art and culture of Nepal, she needed a more formal film education and led her to study at VGIK. After completing her full course of studies there—as the first Nepalese student at VGIK, let alone the first Nepalese woman to study cinema—upon her return she became not only "Kollywood's First Lady" but the only woman to join the Royal Nepal Film Corporation as a filming assistant, working on documentaries for the Ministry of Forestry. Her commitment to film education and educational films and her directorial ambitions were emphasized in Soviet press coverage of the festival.⁵²

Finally, among the many Indian actresses, Shabana Azmi emerged as the one who most reflected the "spirit of the festival." After the international success of her debut in Shyam Benegal's *The Seedling* (*Ankur*, 1974), which was screened at the Moscow film festival, Azmi became the face of the Indian Parallel cinema; that recognition was further confirmed with her performance in Benegal's *Night's End* (*Nishant*, 1975), which was screened at Tashkent to great critical success. In many ways, her persona brought together all the aspects of Indian culture and cinema that were celebrated in the Soviet Union. She was the daughter of Kaifi Azmi, whose life was filled with socialist and Third World accomplishments: he

was a renowned Urdu poet and lifelong communist whose works were translated into Russian, a member of the Progressive Writers' Movement, the All-India president of IPTA, winner of the Soviet Land Nehru Award and the Afro-Asian Writers Lotus Award, and a member of the Soviet-Indian Friendship Association.⁵³ He also worked extensively as a lyricist for films, creating some of the most famous lyrics and poetic dialogues for such classics as Guru Dutt's *Paper Flowers* (*Kagaaz Ke Phool*, 1959), Chetan Anand's *Reality* (*Haqeeqat*, 1964), and several of K. A. Abbas's films—as well as for several independent projects, including Benegal's *The Churning* (*Manthan*, 1976) and M. S. Sathyu's *The Legendary Outlaw* (*Kanneshwara Rama*, 1977). Shabana's mother, Shaukat, had a distinguished resume of her own as an IPTA actress (later to appear on the screen as well).⁵⁴ Shabana's own quick ascent to crossover stardom, both commercial and independent, was seen as carrying on her parents' intellectual and political commitments, making her a perfect spokesperson within the context of socialist cinema.

In an interview in 1976, alongside Indian directors Basu Bhattacharya and S. Sukhdev, Shabana Azmi addressed aesthetic and ideological developments within the Indian film industry, while also speaking knowledgeably and appreciatively of the Soviet cinema of the Thaw. The article concludes with the discussion of "the fate of an Indian woman" as, according to Azmi, the most important theme in cinema, to which she appended a passionate plea for change in the social and economic conditions in the lives of women in India and around the world.⁵⁵ In the 1978 festival, she was a vocal fan of Kaïumov's *Veil* (particularly relevant given her own Urdu Muslim socialist background), while also praising the other women-centered films at the festival.⁵⁶ Her political outspokenness earned her the accolade of "India's Jane Fonda and Vanessa Redgrave rolled into one charismatic icon" in the US account of her retrospective at the 2002 New York Film Festival.⁵⁷ Indeed, by 2002, she could look back on a career both as a star working with such directors as Satyajit Ray and Mrinal Sen and as a political activist lobbying for women's rights and AIDS-education, all the while retaining her membership in the Communist Party of India.

Despite its inevitable ideological heavy-handedness, Tashkent's press coverage offers a rare perspective on the possibility of treating female stardom as an affirmation of women's agency and on the social value of their labor. As the emphasis on the cultural and political activism of these actresses demonstrates, film criticism within this international socialist context assumed a pedagogical function in shaping the spectatorial consciousness, the forming of which was a common topic in Tashkent roundtables. What is perhaps more surprising is that in these discourses we glimpse recognition of a certain charismatic politics and its potential for mass mobilization (a complicated phenomenon in a country where the notion of the "cult of personality" had acquired such heavy historical resonances) in a way that is otherwise unusual for leftist aesthetic discourses—clearly serving as a major site for the creation and negotiations of cultural affinities. Although some male stars



FIGURE 5.4. Beatriz González (Chile), the only woman filmmaker in the group of guests at the 1976 edition of the Tashkent festival. Photo used by permission of Sputnik International.

(such as Raj Kapoor and Toshiro Mifune) also enjoyed the limelight, the predominance of women in such exercises of charismatic politics as star performers—whether actresses, singers, or dancers—was fundamental to the shared culture Tashkent represented. While such gendering of performance spaces and forms of sensual embodiment (physical or aural) is part of the traditional association with the domain of the feminine, the Tashkent sphere foregrounded the agency of these performing women as public cultural and political figures. As such, it allowed for a different understanding of the functions of performance cultures and acknowledgment of the importance of women artists: as the memoirs of Sylvia Leyda Chen and the career of Tamara Khatoum, which open this book, demonstrate, they served as crucial conduits between the public and political spheres, on the one hand, and affective and subjective experiences (of audiences and participants alike), on the other—an important link in the construction of transnational affinities and solidarities.

WOMEN'S CINEMA IN WORLD SOCIALIST CINEMA

Despite this discourse on the artistic and political agency and multiplicity of roles performed by Asian, African, and Latin American women participants in the Soviet press, the number of films directed by women and especially women directors who actively participated at the festival was disappointingly low (fig. 5.4). This discrepancy is particularly striking given the fact that by the 1970s, women were

considerably more prominent in the socialist film industries (as compared to, for example, US cinema), certainly on par with France, Italy, and Germany. Women also played an important, if often not fully acknowledged, part in Third-Worldist and anti-imperialist filmmaking. Many were part of film collectives (such as the Palestinian Film Unit's Khadijah Habashneh and Sulafa Jadallah or the Ukumau group's Beatriz Palacios and Danielle Caillet, and the Cuzco School's María Barea). Others established themselves as auteurs, such as Marta Rodríguez, one of Columbia's most important radical documentary filmmakers and a regular at Leipzig, Heiny Srour in Lebanon, and Selma Baccar in Tunisia, as well as the Cuban Sara Gómez and the Chilean exiles Marilú Mallet, Valeria Sarmiento, and Angelina Vázquez, who were all making films in the 1970s and none of whom was present at Tashkent.⁵⁸ Their absence from the festival was doubtless the result of a number of factors: women's marginal status within their respective film institutions and movements; restrictions of international mobility (a factor more commonly affecting women than men, based on family or other personal circumstances); projections of cultural assumptions by the Soviet organizers—or by their male guests—about women's preferred roles at such events, and consequently women artists' own reservations about such male-dominated exhibition circuits. The lack of a shared international forum (beyond its more regional articulations, where they were still always a tiny minority), therefore, precluded the possibility of a sustained dialogue among these filmmakers, let alone the kind of mobilization of alliances, affinities, and solidarities that were enacted by their male counterparts at Tashkent and elsewhere.⁵⁹

Indeed, in cinematic circles, sexism often overlapped with Cold War politics, and cultural hierarchies between the North and the South remained visibly in place at international events focused on women. For instance, the 1975 Symposium on Women in Cinema, organized by UNESCO, largely excluded African, Asian, and Latin American women. Of twenty-eight participants, only three came from outside Europe and North America: the radical Egyptian filmmaker Ateyyat El Abnoubi, the legendary early Indian film star Durga Khote (who was seventy at the time), and María Luisa Bemberg, who would go on to become one of Latin America's most important filmmakers but who also came from Argentina's highest cultural elite and was directly aligned with European and North American feminist movements. Only two—Márta Mészáros from Hungary and Larisa Shepitko from the USSR—were invited to represent the Soviet bloc.⁶⁰

The absence of women filmmakers at Tashkent further confirms the peculiarly marginal status of women's cinema on both sides of the Cold War. Yet this marginal positionality is in part what allowed for its uniquely controversial (but not oppositional) role vis-à-vis socialist world cinema—redefining it from within in a way that truly challenged many of its hegemonic positions, and not only in relation to gender politics. The rest of this chapter will therefore depart from the specificities of Tashkent's selection to consider some of the key films in the world socialist *women's* cinema canon—Assia Djebar's *The Nouba of the Women of Mount*

Chenoua (*La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, Algeria, 1977), Larisa Shepitko's *Wings* (*Kryl'ia*, 1965), and Lana Gogoberidze's *Some Interviews on Personal Matters* (*Neskol'ko interv'iu po lichnym voprosam*, 1978), none of which were part of the festival.

These films have been discussed in English-language scholarship as notable examples of women's cinema, but they are typically, in fact almost exclusively, approached either from within a national, regional, or auteur context or explicitly in relation to other European or American (women) filmmakers. I argue that, considered together, these films reveal remarkable correspondences, not only in their criticism of patriarchy but in providing glimpses of nonhomosocial relations and communities as constitutive of socialist and liberation struggles. Through their blending of (auto)biographic elements, attention to transgenerational memory, and the diversity and distinctiveness of women's experiences (joys and struggles alike), exploring the historical traumas of the past and the hopes and demands for the future, these films rearticulate the relationships between individual autonomy and the needs of the community. They underscore certain inseparability of the positive and negative function of the state as at the same time a guarantor of rights and as a mechanism of repression. Moreover, they insist on the understanding of liberation as a complex transformative but ongoing unfinished process. As such they reengage the key dialectics of world socialist cinema identified and discussed at length in the next three chapters—between tradition and modernization and between war and peace—in a way that is strikingly personal while fully committed to the socialist ideals of *communitas*.⁶¹

Shepitko's *Wings* and Djebbar's *The Nouba of the Women of Mount Chenoua* center specifically on women's contributions to war and liberation struggles. The two directors stand in different but equally intimate personal relationships to these historical experiences: Shepitko's film is rooted in what she referred to as "a kind of intuitive genetic memory" of her mother's experience of World War II.⁶² Djebbar, an important writer as well as filmmaker, was a journalist during the Algerian Liberation War. Neither of these women's film narratives focuses on the combat; both center, instead, on the aftermath of war and its legacies in women's lives and are memorable for showing the ambivalences and temporal and spatial conflations of war and peace in both (anti/post)colonial and Cold War socialist biopolitics.

While public commemorations of revolutions were fundamental to socialist cultures, their traces in contemporary social reality constituted a much more difficult subject—one that many filmmakers were eager to explore but that the state was less eager to support. The temporary disruption of cultural norms necessitated or caused by war—such as women's participation in public life, changes in the family structure, or increase in the number of disabled people—are only some of the social transformations that significantly affect the private lives of people but tend to be ignored by the state, whose priorities usually lie in the combination of continuing political security and rebuilding industrial and agrarian infrastructures.

The burden of these adjustments falls disproportionately on women, whose traditional patriarchal roles as caregivers tend to be swiftly restored. They are burdened with responsibility for healing the wounds, tending the children, and, especially in the socialist context, covering the absence left by the men killed in the war. In different ways, Shepitko's *Wings* and Djebbar's *The Nouba of the Women of Mount Chenoua* both center on the loss of the sense of belonging that was once provided by the urgency of the struggle, its high costs, and the inadequacy of the official forms of public memory to restore or even acknowledge it.

THE NOUBA OF THE WOMEN OF MOUNT CHENOUA

Djebbar's film famously provides a counternarrative to the hegemonic masculinist mythologies of Algerian revolutionary nationalism forged in war.⁶³ The protagonist of Djebbar's formally highly experimental film (Lila, a stand-in for the director) returns to her native village of Cherrhell fifteen years after Algeria won the war, looking for witnesses who will help her resolve the problem of her brother's disappearance during the war. She is accompanied by her young daughter and by her paralyzed mute husband. The film brings together the stories of the Berber peasant women of Mont Chenoua: stories of their participation in the war, stories of bravery, betrayal, and loss that are markedly different from the monumentalist male-centered narratives of the Algerian "freedom fighter cinema." These stories foreground the unacknowledged cost of the war to women engaged in it and the legacy of pain and bitterness with which they continue to live. Yet the film also offers a certain utopian projection of an alternative community within a clearly demarcated women's space that emerges from these intertwined intergenerational histories. The film's emphasis on women's testimonies and storytelling is remarkably close to that of Gogoberidze's *Some Interviews on Personal Matters* (which I will discuss at length later). The parallels include the role of the narrator, whose figure is identified with the director herself, and the integration of the director's autobiographical elements into the narrative, which is launched from gathering together women's multigenerational stories (including those of Djebbar's own family); the way these stories expose the repressed traumatic national histories experienced by women; and, finally, the resilience and vibrancy of their community beyond the traumatic past.

And while the community depicted on the screen is constituted through personal experiences focusing on the private domestic realm, in opposition to the official state national culture, the narrator's role as a filmmaker (or, in the case of Gogoberidze's film, a journalist) brings it—both metaphorically, as part of the diegesis, and literally, through the exhibition of the actual film—into the shared public sphere, thus providing a radically alternative public commemoration of the traumas of the war. Any straightforward didactic effect is mitigated, however, by Lila, who, while telling one story through the film's narrative to the audience,

chooses to tell a different version to her daughter, remarking, “Why tell her about the tragedies of the past? The occupation, the war and the hatred. It’s better for her to dream of birds.” The gesture of protecting a child from “the tragedies of the past” marks a real departure from the way children are usually interpellated in socialist war cinema, where their knowledge of struggle is their first step toward involvement in it (as we will see in detail in chapter 8). In this way, too *The Nouba of the Women of Mount Chenoua* represents a limit case of a socialist war film, as well as a Third-Worldist film more generally—made at the very moment of its decline. The year of the film’s release, 1978, was also the year of Boumédiène’s death, who had ruled Algeria since 1965, and a year before Chadli Bendjedid’s election, which marked Algeria’s movement away from Ben Bella–style socialism, and further concessions toward an Islamism that was advancing its own agenda vis-à-vis women’s rights, private and public alike.⁶⁴

The film is structured through Lila’s sense of dislocation and loss, and the possible rekindling of community offered in it is decidedly not grounded in the kind of internationalist solidarity we see in most official articulations of the genre. Yet the film never moves in the direction of the (neo)liberal trope of the subjective overcoming of traumatic memories, of “moving on” and individual self-realization that became typical devices of global art cinema’s engagement with the topic of historical trauma and women in the post–Cold War period. Instead, the film seeks to restore women’s place within it; instead of rejecting the struggle, it insists on the process of continuous resistance by attending to the dissonances and fissures within the social body and the public memory of the marginalized, refusing the assumption that liberation was achieved, treating it instead as an unfinished project.

WINGS

Shepitko’s *Wings*, made almost fifteen years earlier than Djebbar’s film but positioned at a similar historical distance from the war whose legacy it investigates—in this case, some two decades after the end of World War II—is stylistically somewhat more conventional. Yet it also includes jarring and disorienting montage sequences of the protagonist’s fragmented and disjointed memories and dreams that disrupt the narrative and produce a complex and rather ambiguous diegetic optical space. While *The Nouba*’s narrative identification with Lila is, if anything, overdetermined, Nadezhda, the protagonist of *Wings*, occupies a much more ambivalent position vis-à-vis both the director and the spectator. Unlike Shepitko, who was twenty-seven during the making of the film, its heroine is a middle-aged woman, a much-decorated fighter pilot of World War II. Forced to abandon her military career, she nonetheless occupies a highly placed social and professional position as a provincial official (a deputy in the City Soviet) and principal of a vocational school. Her heroism during the war is commemorated at the local museum. Her military demeanor (unnaturally straight back, buttoned-up blouse, commanding voice, uncompromising and unwavering certainty of every pronouncement)

clashes strikingly with her environment. She bears every marker of belonging to the Stalinist generation, the cultural formation to which Shepitko's own generation of the Thaw saw itself in opposition.⁶⁵ In an interview, the director said that she was, indeed, unable to "become one" with her heroine, explicitly connecting Nadezhda's character with Shepitko's parents' generation.⁶⁶ The film focuses on Nadezhda's particular inability to reenter the very private, intimate realm that the Thaw generation cherished, as is evidenced by her failure as a mother (she is rejected by her adopted daughter), her ambivalence toward her long-suffering adoring suitor, and her conflicts with the more freedom-loving students at her school. She rejects traditional associations of women with domesticity ("Why does a person have to peel potatoes on Sunday?" she exclaims in a much-quoted outburst), and her one heartbreaking attempt to make herself sexually available to a stranger by unbuttoning her coat and provocatively slipping it off her shoulders is never even acknowledged, let alone reciprocated.

But despite this emphasis on the difficulties of identification—Nadezhda's with her own private life and people's emotions; the director's with her heroine's generational place; the audience's with the protagonist—*Wings* shows us Nadezhda's most treasured, most intimate memories and dreams in a series of flashbacks that make the audience aware not only of the protagonist's humanity and fragility but, more important, of the sense of absolute freedom she experienced in the war—which was, nevertheless, inseparable from its traumatic impact. During these montage sequences, providing point-of-view shots (from the cockpit of the plane, as we eventually come to realize), the narrative and spectatorial positions become aligned. Such subjective representations become the only space allowed by the diegesis of the film that enables the creation of a unified symbolic community of the filmmaker, the character, and the audience, as well as a lens through which we come to interpret the character in a radically different and sympathetic way. Thus, while providing a powerful critique of the war as the source of trauma as well as of the dehumanization of the Stalinist era associated with it, the film affirms, dialectically, its foundational role as the moment of liberation and moral fortitude. Despite all of Nadezhda's seemingly irreparable flaws, her commitment to doing the right thing, to the greater good, and to the well-being of everyone is the driving force of her life, ultimately making her the center of pathos and the moral fortitude within the film.

Wings gains its complexity by making clear that the greater stakes of the struggle are not to be easily disavowed, in spite of the irreparable losses of life and the existential costs of militarization, impacting both this woman's individual psyche and the *socius* itself. In its reckoning with the war's legacy, this film is characteristic of the Soviet Thaw. And despite her absence from Tashkent, Shepitko's involvement with Central Asia, too, goes back to the early 1960s, with her VGIK diploma film *Heat* (*Znoi*, 1963), which was based on Chingiz Aitmatov's short story and filmed in Kazakhstan, the first feature film produced by the Kirgiz Film Studio, with Tolmush Okeev working as a sound engineer. The film was entered

into the Symposium of New Cinemas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America at the 1964 Karlovy Vary festival and won the Grand Prix at the 1965 Frankfurt festival of cinemas of Asia and Africa.⁶⁷ By the 1970s, Shepitko's films were recognized as works of an important *auteur* and were screened at major European film festivals: her last film, *The Ascent* (*Voskhozhdenie*, 1977), was the second film directed by a woman to win a Golden Bear at the Berlin film festival and only the third film directed by a woman to win a top award at any major European film festival. It was screened as part of the market selection of the Tashkent festival in 1978, but otherwise Shepitko's work and participation followed a more recognizable European film festival trajectory. But after Shepitko's tragic death in 1979, the Indian filmmaker Basu Bhattacharya, a regular guest at the Tashkent meetings, commented on how seeing this film was an important inspiration for him to support women filmmakers in his own country. In 1980, he brought to Tashkent *Touch* (*Sparsh*, 1980), which he produced, directed by Sai Paranjpye, one of the first women filmmakers in India, starring Shabana Azmi. But even this gesture did not lead to Paranjpye speaking about her film at Tashkent; instead, Bhattacharya introduced it, and its Soviet coverage emphasized his role as a producer, as well as Azmi's performance. The structure of gendered exclusion held.

SOCIALIST WOMEN AND THE DOUBLE BURDEN

Just as socialist women's war films contested predominant heroic and melodramatic narratives, women's films that centered on contemporary life offered equally powerful correctives to familiar socialist rhetoric by exposing the ongoing problem of domestic labor and the infamous "double burden" that was, indeed, experienced and discussed by working women everywhere.⁶⁸ In fact, as the Cuban director Sara Gómez made clear (referring to the ideological program of the Federation of Cuban Women), the burden was triple, including not only domestic labor and job-place performance but also expectations of voluntary overtime in social, political, and cultural work.⁶⁹

Within the socialist bloc an open discussion of this problem created tension with the officially held position that the entry of women into the public sphere and the labor force resolved the patriarchal/capitalist problem, instead of becoming a source of other problems. The issue was occasionally explored within some very high-profile films across the Global South and socialist bloc, from *The Big City* (*Mahanagar*, 1963), the only film by Satyajit Ray that had wide distribution in the Soviet Union in the late 1960s, to Pastor Vega's *Portrait of Teresa* (*Retrato de Teresa*, 1979), the Cuban entry into that year's Moscow film festival. But it was most poignantly addressed by women filmmakers themselves, whether Cuban, such as, most famously, by Sara Gómez in *One Way or Another* (*De cierta manera*, 1974), or Soviet, such as the Georgian Lana Gogoberidze in *Some Interviews on Personal Matters*.

SOME INTERVIEWS ON PERSONAL MATTERS

While Gómez's film has rightfully taken its place as one of the classics of not only Cuban but international women's cinema, Gogoberidze's work (much like that of her contemporaries Shepitko or Kira Muratova), while widely screened to this day, has rarely been discussed outside the Soviet film context. *Some Interviews* presents a highly autobiographical and moving reflection on the experience of a journalist who is passionate about her job and struggling with the routines of domestic life, including her husband's increasing demands on her, which are prelude to his infidelity. A close look at this remarkable film demonstrates how this set of issues was negotiated in ways that clearly exceed the male-dominated discourses at Tashkent, pointing to the film's place in the larger socialist film sphere.

The film's title, which comes across as a fragment of official speech, gives an impression that it fits in with the similar late Soviet melodramas such as Gleb Panfilov's *I Want the Floor* (*Proshu slova*, 1976), which depicts a woman's career and dedication to social concerns as the cause of her family's tragic demise. In its Soviet publicity, Gogoberidze's film was summarized as follows: "Sofiko considers herself happy: she has an interesting job, she loves her husband and children. She is always around people, she knows their problems and concerns, and she finds the meaning of life in her job. But being often away from home she doesn't even notice that the well-being of her family is threatened."⁷⁰

This annotation gives a subtle impression that this film (like *I Want the Floor*) holds its female protagonist responsible for her neglect of her family, an interpretation that would blame Sofiko for her husband's infidelity—a claim voiced in the film by the husband himself. This, however, is decidedly not the conclusion any careful viewer of the film will draw. Instead, despite its decidedly unobtrusive and seemingly nondidactic authorial style, which involves intercutting Sofiko's daily routine of the job (she is in charge of addressing the concerns raised by the readers who write to the newspaper), the interviews she conducts with other women, multiple flashbacks to her childhood, and her domestic life, the film brilliantly demonstrates the way that private and public lives constitute each other, as well as the way individual stories reflect the long *durée* of history. We realize that Sofiko's attention to the experiences of others, a sense of critical connection and solidarity with other women, and her need to advocate for justice regardless of the power hierarchies that form the core of her professional and public life, are direct extensions of her family life and history. They are informed by the tacit knowledge she has learned from the other women around her—her aunts and her mother, who, as we gradually realize in the course of the film, was sent to the Gulag when Sofiko was a child, returning to the family many years later.

In a critical moment in the film, a school principal comes to thank Sofiko for her public defense of his efforts to save the school's playground from becoming a construction site for a politician's private house. He admits that he didn't believe

that she would be able to help: "I thought, what can a woman do against such a scoundrel? But now I understand. This is a new generation. You have not experienced fear." As the film cuts to Sofiko's pensive face, we are presented with a series of quick flashbacks, whose extended versions we have already seen earlier in the film: an image of Sofiko as a child, alone in the house, after her mother's arrest; an image of the kids looking through the windows of an orphanage, as Sofiko's aunts are taking her away with them; her mother's return from "the North" (i.e., the camps) with a frightened young Sofiko up against a wall, an expression of anticipation and horror on her face, wringing her arms. The temporally overlapping jump cuts highlight the eeriness of these memories in juxtaposition with the school principal's patronizing assumption. In fact, the experience of fear—the fear of authorities, of the state, of the potential costs of an openly political life and fighting for one's beliefs—has clearly shaped Sofiko's social position and professional dedication. These fears do not stem from being cocooned from historical trauma, nor from the egoism of privilege, nor from innocence or a simple inability to see the falsity of such official engagements with public life, as her husband maintains when ridiculing her journalism. His mockery of Sofiko's interview questions ("Are you happy? What do you dream about?") opens up the recognition and critique of what scholars have come to term the emotionally charged commonplaces of the media in late socialism, which would have been familiar to the film's contemporary Soviet viewers.⁷¹ In the words of Christine Evans, "in an environment in which forms of visual or linguistic evidence were seen as discredited or worn out fifty years since 1917, emotions, and the personal ethical qualities and attitudes toward Soviet life they revealed, seemed to offer the most convincing evidence of the superiority of the Soviet 'way of life.'"⁷²

Sofiko's husband's arguments would have resonated powerfully with many Soviet—and socialist—audiences, making her complicity with such officially recognized platitudes ideologically suspect. Yet Gogoberidze rejects this criticism, making clear that Sofiko's dedication to "digging in other people's problems" (as her husband dismissively refers to both her interviews with women and her social activism) is not rooted in her blindness toward the regime but instead is intrinsically linked to the historical trauma embodied in her mother's and her own experience of state repression and the lessons she draws from it. Her refusal to retreat into the private sphere, complacency, and consumption—to accept a promotion offered to her, which would entail a better paid bureaucratic position that would also allow her to spend more time with her family and be a "better wife and mother" and to buy a car, which seems to be her husband Archil's only dream—appears, instead, to be a choice resulting from a sustained reflection on her experiences and those of other women. Those "interviews on personal matters" repeatedly intercut the main narrative, sometimes as part of the diegesis, sometimes as memories or associations triggered by events in Sofiko's own life, as well as conversations with her aunts and memories of her mother. They also serve as links to the variety of

women's experiences and the lessons they draw from those experiences, as well as to the traumas of war and Stalinism. The two aunts, both bearing unmistakable markers of "old intelligentsia" (clearly referencing a pre-Stalinist era) in their dress and manners, are touching as fascinating characters in their own right. They are portrayed neither as older and outdated modes of subservient femininity nor as nostalgic reminders of better days; instead, they are fully independent, autonomous intellectuals, typically taking opposing positions on most issues although sometimes agreeing with Sofiko.

As Sofiko is always shown helping her aunts around the house, the costs of domestic labor for women in a socialist society are presented vividly, cuing the film to women's work—from scenes of women cooking (with Sofiko cheerfully announcing that what she thought would be dinner for two days will now have to be served to guests arriving unannounced) to the quintessential women's experience in the Soviet Union—standing in several long lines at once to buy groceries, carrying home heavy bags, and trying to get on a crowded bus.⁷³ While Sofiko confronts them all with admirable cheer, the detailed documentation of these experiences (and the total absence of men in these scenes) speaks for itself. When one of the interviewees gives an obvious answer to the question of what a woman does in her free time ("What time to myself? I don't have any time left"), what emerges as an alternative is a dream of the rural life, where the alienation of a nuclear family is mitigated by a more communal life. The older women whom we see Sofiko talk to likewise debunk the assumption that a woman's happiness lies in her family: one talks passionately and intensely of her love for books, and the other comes with a request to move to a retirement home despite having children who could take care of her; that way, she says, at least she could have other people to talk to.

Sofiko's job responding to people's letters to the newspaper, which in turn spurs her activism, embodies the public sphere in a socialist context that makes it a matter of dynamic and reciprocal relationships between private individuals and state institutions. The act of letter writing to newspapers and magazines and the act of responding to them signals the state institutional responsiveness to private citizen's concerns, even as the latter, logically, are made public concerns.⁷⁴ The film does not hide the ambivalences and resistances that emerge as part of this process, as when one woman refuses to open the door to Sofiko or the striking moment when another woman, who has just delivered a passionate and almost unhinged monologue accusing the man who abandoned her, resolutely refuses to give his name, suddenly aware of the implications of the state stepping in. Neither in the stories conveyed by the women in their interviews nor in Sofiko's own narrative does the film allow some abstract exchangeability of the private with the public or naivete about the complex relationship between the state and the individual's destinies.

Sofiko's own onscreen presence—her warmth and incredible vitality alternating with pensiveness, at times amused, at times serious or troubled, suggestive of her inner world—is conveyed by the incomparable Sofiko Chiaureli, the daughter

of the director of the Stalinist classics *The Vow* (*Kliatva*, Mikheil Chiaureli, 1946) and *The Fall of Berlin* (*Padenie Berlina*, Mikheil Chiaureli, 1949). The actress was famously the muse of Sergei Paradjanov and an important figure within the history of Georgian national theater (associated with both the Rustaveli Theater in the 1960s and the Marjanishvili Theater later). Her own screen and stage and personal history contributes additional layers and complexity to the character (perhaps not accidentally sharing her first name). We see Sofiko lovingly and happily playing with the children, being affectionate with her husband, being a generous hostess when he brings guests over, and looking after her aunts—sometimes patiently, sometimes joking—in a way that displays genuine intimacy and ample capacity for human connection. Unlike many 1970s Soviet films, *Some Interviews* debunks the late Soviet normative assumptions that engagement in public and professional pursuits (for a woman) is merely a sign of inability to experience intimacy or failure of personal life, that public and private realms are separate and incommensurable with each other, that the lessons of history teach us the futility of social struggle, and that artistic recourses to the particular experience of women are inferior to the more “serious” concerns of art.

Lana Gogoberidze’s own remarkable family history’s reflection in the film is itself a testimony to the way women’s creative and political lives intersected with Soviet history. Her mother, Nutsa, was the first woman director in Georgia, who started in filmmaking when she was twenty-five, after having obtained a philosophy degree in the University of Jena. She married Georgian Communist Party activist Levan Gogoberidze and began working on documentary *kulturfilms* with Mikhail Kalatozov, directing her first feature, *Ill-tempered* (*Užmuri*) in 1934. The film was immediately banned, despite Eisenstein’s, Shklovsky’s, and Dovzhenko’s defense, owing to the screenplay’s affiliation with the Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), which came under attack.⁷⁵ Subsequently, after Levan’s arrest and execution, Nutsa was sent to camps for ten years as the wife of an “enemy of the people,” and her name was erased entirely from film history. Her daughter, Lana Gogoberidze, grew up completely unaware of her mother’s films (even after her return from the Gulag), but she was persistent in trying to pursue her own cinematic career. As a daughter of political prisoners, she was not able to start at VGIK until after Stalin’s death, but she occupied her time until then by establishing herself as a literary scholar and translator of poetry, completing a doctoral dissertation on Walt Whitman. At VGIK, she studied under Gerasimov, in the same group as Kira Muratova, just a few years removed from Larisa Shepitko and alongside what would turn out to be a constellation of Georgia’s most important filmmakers—Tengiz Abuladze, Otar Iosseliani, and Eldar Shengelaia. In her formative years as a filmmaker, she participated in the internationalization of the film sphere; the development of poetic, auteur, and women’s cinema; and the revival of Georgian national artistic culture.⁷⁶ *Some Interviews on Personal Matters* is in many ways a reflection of that era and the evidence of its longevity, especially outside of the

confines of Moscow and Leningrad. The film was screened widely in the Soviet Union (winning the main prize in the 1979 national film festival in Ashkhabad), as well as, eventually, abroad—but it was not shown at Tashkent, one can speculate, because it was one of the first films to openly reference the experience of women in Stalinist labor camps and the fate of their children.⁷⁷

As this chapter shows, women's cinema occupies a marginal, albeit crucial, space within world socialist cinema in its articulation of the shared vision of some of its key problematics, such as the dialectics of tradition and modernization and war and peace. The next three chapters will explore how these issues were constructed from a more mainstream position. Even though, as we will see, representation of women will often play a crucial role within them, these male-directed films formed the core of world socialist cinema. Thus, as I have done in this chapter, I will expand from the exclusive focus on Tashkent to discuss a broader range of films in which the affinity to Tashkent is characteristic. If only some of them were screened at the festival, all of them, nonetheless, formed the larger body of cinematic production it intended to represent.