

Title: Big Brother is Watching: Adolescent Boys without Fathers in Soviet Film of the Post-Stalin Period

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The strong male in Soviet film of the post-Stalin period most often appears in a peer, rather than paternal, relationship. The heroic military commander, factory director, or party organizer is a ubiquitous figure, but the model patriarch is often absent from the home. While many fathers did not, in fact, return from the front or the camps, it seems that in the cinema there may be an over-representation of this post-war demographic. This paper will explore films of the 1950s and 60s depicting boyhood without the father, focusing on a number of lesser-known works produced by the Gorky Studios, which specialized in children's cinema at the time. It will extend previous work on the symbolic father in Soviet culture, which has often focused on the role of Lenin and Stalin. In these films we encounter a number of more local "big brothers," such as workers, policemen, or building superintendents, who guide young boys in their development. These men provide authority and discipline, but also a measure of paternal sympathy and affection. The paper will consider the larger social implications of this model, in which the boy is guided less by the man of the house than by "the man" at large.