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OUT OF THE SEVENTIES: WOMEN IN FILM AND VIDEO

Marina Goldovskaya

Interviewed by Jane Collings

Completed under the auspices
of the
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University of California
Los Angeles

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MARINA GOLDOVSKAYA
Biographical Summary

Director, Cinematographer, Producer
Professor, UCLA School of Theater, Film & Television

Member of the American Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences
Member of the European Film Academy
Member of the Russian Academy of Television

Marina Goldovskaya is one of Russia's best-known documentary filmmakers with a strong international reputation. She has made 32 documentary films and more than 100 TV programs for Russian, Austrian, French, German and American Television.

In the USA, Marina first got recognition for her feature length documentary "Solovky Power" which was the first film revealing the horrors of the Soviet concentration camps. The film premiered in the USA at the Sundance Film Festival in 1989 where it received high appreciation of the audience and a special certificate of acknowledgement from the Jury.

In 1990, she made "A Taste of Freedom" for Turner Television (TNT), giving the world the first glimpses of the effects of perestroika, by relating the life of a Moscow journalist and his family. In "The House on Arbat Street," she told the story of Russia in the 20th century. This film received the Best Film of the year Award at Prix Europe in 1994, The Ester Prize in Washington, DC, and the Grand Prix at the Film Festival in Monte Carlo.

Marina was the first Russian filmmaker to introduce a personal diary style describing the social changes in Russia. She used this style in "The Shattered Mirror" and in "Lucky to Be Born In Russia" which chronicled the emotions of Russians living through the turmoil of perestroika culminating in the putsch of October 1993.

Her other productions include "This Shaking World" (1995), a film which takes the viewer deep into the lives of individuals representing a cross section of Southern California's Melting Pot, "The Children of Ivan Kuzmich" (1997), a poetic journey into the lives of eight amazing people and their teacher of class 1941 in a Moscow School, "A Poet on the Lower East Side"(1998), a remarkable visit with Allen Ginsberg, and the "The Prince is Back" (1999), a very human view of today's happenings in Russia, which since it's first theatrical premier and broadcast in Europe has been honored in more then twenty Film Festivals throughout the world receiving among others awards the" Silver Rembrandt" in Amsterdam, 2001, the TELLY Award, Cincinnati, USA, the Moondance Spirit Award USA, and the Media Award, Germany. Her latest documentary is "The Russian Story," a film profiling Anatoly Rybakov, the best-selling Russian novelist with glimpses of life in today's Russia. It premiered to great acclaim at the 2006 International Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam and has since been invited to many Festivals throughout the world.

Parallel to her career as a filmmaker, Marina Goldovskaya pursued a teaching and academic career. She received a Ph.D. in Fine Arts in the Moscow State Film Institute (1987), taught documentary in Moscow State University (1966-1995), and wrote numerous articles and six books on documentary filmmaking. Her last work, "A Woman with a Movie Camera", was published in Russia by Materik in 2002.The English edition of this book "A Woman with a Camera. My Life as a Russian Filmmaker" (in production) is scheduled to be published by Texas University Press in October 2006.

Her academic career covers many parts of the world. In the USA, she taught at the University of California in San Diego (UCSD), at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, NY, and at the California State University in Northridge (Los Angeles). She has conducted numerous workshops and film seminars in Russia, Switzerland, Austria, France and the USA.

In 1996 Marina, a tenured Professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, School of Theater, Film & Television, created a public forum for Documentaries by organizing the very popular Documentary Salon Series which todate screens high quality films on a monthly basis for the LA film community.

In December of 2005 in Moscow Marina Goldovskaya received the Lifetime Career Achievement Award for her contribution to the art of documenting Russian History.

INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Jane Collings, interviewer and senior editor, Center for Oral History Research. B.A., Communications, Antioch College; M.A., Communications, University of Iowa; Ph.D., Critical Studies, University of California, Los Angeles.

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Goldovskaya's office, University of California, Los Angeles.

Dates of sessions: June 1, 2004; August 16, 2004; December 15, 2004; March 13, 2005.

Total number of recorded hours: 7.5.

Persons present during interview: Goldovskaya and Collings.

CONDUCT AND PROCESSING OF INTERVIEW:

This is one in a series of interviews the UCLA Library's Center for Oral History Research had conducted with filmmakers and artists in the area of feminist media and art of the seventies in Los Angeles, entitled *Out of the Seventies: Women in Film and Video.*

Collings prepared for the interviews by viewing Goldovskaya's films and reading interviews that Goldovskaya had given previously about her work.

The interviewer compiled the table of contents and interview history and supplied the spellings of proper nouns and the complete names entered in brackets in the text. Goldovskaya reviewed the transcript. She verified proper names, made a number of corrections and additions, and provided the resumé at the front of the transcript.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings of the interview are in the university archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of permanent noncurrent records of the university. Records relating to the interview are located in the office of the UCLA Library's Center for Oral History Research.

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JUNE 1, 2004

COLLINGS: This is Jane Collings interviewing Marina Goldovskaya on June 1st, 2004, in her office at UCLA.

Good morning, Marina.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Good morning, Jane.

COLLINGS: Why don't we start off with you telling me where and when you were born.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, I was born in Moscow on the 15th of July, 1941. It was the first day that Moscow was bombed by the Germans. I have an interview, the only interview that I recorded with my mother, a year before she passed away, where she told me how I was born. It was a difficult, difficult birth and she was very sick and she felt very bad. Suddenly they heard this terrible noise of coming airplanes and bombs and explosions, and my mother cried, cried, she screamed to the nurses, "Please, please, take her away. Take her away into the basement."

And the nurse said to my mother, "Now she will stay with you. You have one faith that you have to share."

COLLINGS: That was quite a beginning.

GOLDOVSKAYA: A good beginning. So that's how I was born.

COLLINGS: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, unfortunately, I don't have any brothers and sisters. Three months later, I was two and a half months old when there was this panic and Germans were approaching Moscow and everybody was evacuated who could be. My father [Evsey Mikhajlovitch Goldovsky] at first, had to join ["peoples' battalion"]. It was the stupidest thing possible to imagine, because people who knew nothing about war were sent to the front to defend Moscow. They didn't know how to fight. My father was the most peaceful person in the world, and he didn't know even how to hold this rifle. And he would go. He couldn't say no. My mother told me that he was already packing his things. The order came completely unexpectedly, and he had no time to try to get away from this order. And then it was impossible to do anything. If you would say "no", then you would be immediately put into prison. The times were very bad.

But my father occupied a very important position: he was the deputy chair, responsible for all the research in the Moscow Institute of Film Technology. This institute was producing not only film equipment, but it was very much involved in military kind of equipment and it was connected with photographing the space over cities.

COLLINGS: Right. Sort of a surveillance kind of—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly, at the time.

COLLINGS: Military surveillance of some sort.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Military surveillance of the level of 1941. So it was a very important institute. It was covered. The umbrella was this film technology, and [they

really were very much involved in] film technology. I will tell you later about my father, because it's pretty interesting. But the director [Pavel Vasilievitch Kozlov] of the Research Institute of Film Technology came in the evening when my father had packed already. He came and he said, "You know, I got for you a consolidation of your duty."

COLLINGS: Because it sounds like he would have been more useful in another way.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. "The institute will be evacuated into middle Asia, to Samarkand, and you have to help us." And without my father, probably it would have been much more difficult, because he was actually the chief. He was handling everything in the institute because this director— We lived in one house, it was a filmmaker's house and I knew him. He was really not a great specialist, but he had a good biography, he came from a peasant family, he was a member of the [Communist] Party, he was Russian. My father was Jewish. It was no good in Russia. So everything in his— It's very funny to say that, but Kozlov's CV, was the one that was needed to make a career. My father's CV was not so good. There were some problems.

COLLINGS: What was his class background?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, he came from a very poor family, my father. His father was a clockmaker. He was repairing clocks in a very little town in Ukraine. So my grandfather [Moisely Goldovsky], I never knew him; he died in 1915. I have a suspicion now, because I was told by my cousin—my father never told me about this—he was probably killed in a pogrom. But my father never talked about him. And

And it was really strange, but I know nothing about my roots from this side. I never saw my grandmother [Sofia Alexandrovna Goldovskaya] because she passed away in the evacuation in middle Asia, from a heart attack. I've never seen her. She saw me when I was a baby, but I don't remember her. I was then maybe a year old.

My mother came from a rich family, which she had to hide all her life, and she could never become a member of the Party. I think she wanted to. She was this zealous Comsomol Bolshevik person.

COLLINGS: She was?

GOLDOVSKAYA: She was. She was, strangely enough. But it was a very attractive ideology and I'll tell you later why.

COLLINGS: Okay.

GOLDOVSKAYA: But she came from this background, so she always felt she has this "blue blood," you know. Her parents owned a big factory. I live now on the same street. I have an apartment still in Moscow, and it's on the same street, and not long ago I went to film this factory.

COLLINGS: Were they able to keep the factory?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. Of course, in 1917 everything was nationalized. But in 1922, again, there was this New Economic Policy installed by Lenin in order to revitalize the economy, which was completely in rubbles, and so my grandparents got the factory back. Workers voted for them to come back, because they were very— My grandfather and grandmother, they were very smart people— And probably were nice people, so the workers liked them and had no problems with them. And until

they were running their own factory. I don't think it belonged to them, but still they were working there and they could kind of sustain—

COLLINGS: Yes, sustain the business and everybody could have a job.

GOLDOVSKAYA: In 1929, again Stalin cancelled the New Economic Policy. They were left without any rights. It was called "rishentzi". They were deprived of all their civil rights. They couldn't vote. They couldn't work.

COLLINGS: Now, this was because they had been capitalists?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, capitalists, right. And that's why, my mother had to hide somehow, her origin, ancestry. People could be bribed. I'll tell you such a story. I describe it in my book, actually. It will soon, hopefully, be published. It's translated already.

COLLINGS: Oh, good.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So what happened is that in 1917 my grandmother kept her jewelry and some gold coins and some money in a safe in a bank. Of course, everything immediately was nationalized, and there were guards everywhere. But my grandmother, she was very smart, and she went immediately to this place and there was a Red Army soldier, who was a guard, she told him, "I have a safe. I need to take out my stuff. Half will belong to you."

And you know—

COLLINGS: He said, "Fine." [laughs]

GOLDOVSKAYA: He said, "Fine." He got half and he was off.

My grandmother, they kept this throughout the whole difficult period of life. The last little things were sold when the war broke and then, when there was nothing to eat, nothing to— You know. So they kind of—

COLLINGS: They sold it at that time to get some food?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Sold it, yes. So that was my mother's story. So my mother was from a rich family and my father was from a very poor family.

COLLINGS: Was your mother also Jewish?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, she was Jewish, but she came from Lithuania. Their family came from Lithuania. Actually what she told me was that after the war she went to Lithuania with my father to see what happened to the relatives, to her relatives. Everybody was killed in the Holocaust. Everyone. Every single person. There was only one uncle of hers— No, two. One was in the United States, who was lucky enough to get out of this country in 1917, and she met him in '69 or '70 when she came to the United States as a tourist. And one, I know, went to Australia. I tried to find him when I was in Australia, and there were lots of people with her name in the telephone book, and I called many and they were all from Russia, but they didn't know where they came from. All the ends were lost. But you say, was she Jewish, she was Jewish and my father was Jewish, but the thing is that we never— They never practiced.

COLLINGS: They were secular.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Absolutely. I'm not sure, I don't know about my father, because he never spoke about it and I never asked because I was not interested. I was a very

Soviet child, extremely Soviet child, because this ideology was— It was, in words, it was very correct, appealing, and very good. You have to be an internationalist, you are born equal— Equality, fraternity, freedom, all this stuff, and it sunk into me. So I absorbed it since childhood. Socialistic ideas were appealing and I still cannot— Don't like, you know, not to be a member of a group. It was such a good feeling to be in a group of people, to do one big thing, to try to help, to do something meaningful. You know, this is sitting very deeply in me and I cannot get rid of it even now.

COLLINGS: Also the Soviet Union was in its ascendancy as you were growing up.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. Also we went to demonstrations every first of May and seventh of November, and when I was a Pioneer, a Young Pioneer, it was impossible not to be one of them. My parents never said anything against it, of course. I was so much interested, and everybody was, and I wanted to be a part of the Soviet life, right? So I remember we went to the demonstrations, and this feeling of being a part of a huge country which is winning, which is, you know—

COLLINGS: Moving ahead.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —moving ahead. And it was such an important feeling. And I was a very zealous Comsomol leader. I had lots of energy, the people, the students, they always voted for me. And then when I became a member of the Party, because when I started working on television— I'm getting ahead of time. When I was working on television, I already understood a lot about the totalitarian regime we lived in but, it was impossible to work not being a member of the Party, because it was very, very, ideologically loaded. Television and radio, even more than the newspapers. It

was the media, *the* media, of the time. I was working in the very epicenter of the brainwashing machine.

From the very beginning I was pretty successful. When I started working. I was twenty-one, I just graduated from the film school, I was young. I worked very hard from the beginning of my career; I wrote my first dissertation and my second Ph.D. degree. So I was really keen on learning, and it was also the result of the Soviet education.

Very soon, "they", I mean the leaders of our television communist organization—They approached me and said, "We discussed your nomination. We need young people from intelligentsia." Usually members of the Party were preferred to be from peasants and working class; intelligentsia, not so much, because intelligentsia always was under suspicion. They were thinking too much; it was not good. So they said, "We thought that you should join our ranks."

I was twenty-five then; 1966. I said, "But I'm so young. Are you sure?"

"Oh yes, yes."

I said, "Do you think it will be possible?" Because it was a very difficult procedure to go through all this. One had to go through twelve committees. I had to go through twelve committees and each asked me at least twenty questions. Silly, idiotic.

COLLINGS: What kind of questions?

GOLDOVSKAYA: [All sorts of questions on the history of the Communist Party, on contemporary politics, etc., etc.] You know, all this Marx stuff. I read Marx twenty

times and I read Lenin, and ask me what I was reading, I would never tell you because it was all demagogical. There was no substance there. There was all these general words at least in the editions that was accessible to us.

COLLINGS: So they didn't have you reading Party literature? It was actually sort of primary sources in that sense?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Oh yes. Lots, lots. In fact, I had to know everything about the current situation, about the political parties, about the Communist Party of the United States. Gus Hall, I remember he was seeking sitting here. You know, all these—Everything. Everything. And how terrible the United States are and how terrible the western countries are. It was not pleasant to real all this sometimes. Disgusting. But we were used to reading Greek literature from school. It was all in the school program.

And I said, "Well, I have to think."

And he told me, this guy, KGB guy—they were all KGB guys, we always thought—and he said, "Well, I'm astonished. You have to think about it? It is such an honor."

Then I understood that if I say, "I'll think," I'll have a problem. It was very difficult to get into television, and I was accepted, I am sure, only because my father was well-known in the field of cinema and television.

So I said, "Well, yeah. Thank you for such an honor."

COLLINGS: Are they particularly looking for women at that time, or do you think that the fact that you were a woman was sort of graciously overlooked?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, no, it was all very well— You are asking me the right question. Of course, the fact that I was a woman was very important for them. It was all calculated. For example, how it happened, that I for this unexpected offer. It was meeting commemorating a holiday, the anniversary of Great October Socialist Revolution, seventh of November, and on the fifth of November there was usually a big meeting for all the people who worked in the Television and Radio Committee, [Ministry]. It was for a huge group of people, for maybe five thousand people in this huge room, and I was told that I had to sit on stage in the Presidium, I thought, "What is that?" I was twenty-four years old. "Why do they want me in the Presidium?" I was sitting close to our minister of television.

COLLINGS: So you would certainly be *on* television.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, I would never even come close to him, because who was I? I was only an assistant camera person. Maybe I was already a camera person. I think I was. Yes, yes, I was, but lower grade.

So he was sitting close to me, and I was pretty good-looking at the time, young, and he started joking and talking to me like a normal human being. We were talking, and he asked me who I am, and then talking and joking, and then the next day after that I was approached by this Communist Party executive. So what does it mean? [Probably, the minister said about me something like that]. "This is a nice woman. Talk to her." Probably that's what happened.

And [later I learned why I was] selected to be in the Presidium. My division [unit] where I worked, they said that they have to send from our division a woman, a

camera person. And the woman was to be young. I was the only young women in our unit. Everything fitted. So when you ask me whether it mattered that I was a woman, I think it did not matter. For example, a cosmonaut, it was not because it was [Valentina] Tereshkova who was so good. She was not so good. She was [not a very nice person and not too smart.]. Later, I made a film about her. [I know her pretty well.]

COLLINGS: Well, they sent a chimpanzee to space, so— [laughs]

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. Exactly. But she came from a peasant family, she was a pilot while working in a factory. Her CV was good. Probably I also fitted at this moment all these required politics. They probably needed somebody from intelligentsia, somebody maybe Jewish, I don't know, a woman. This was needed. So it's not because I was such a good candidate, just the circumstances fitted.

COLLINGS: Did you realize that at the time?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Oh yes. I felt it. I felt it. You know, I felt things. I started to feel very early. Actually, I didn't want to get into the Party, truthfully. I wouldn't do it by myself, but as I was approached, I knew that there is no backing out of that, because I knew, I felt, I felt it with my—guts. [My family's reaction was very telling.]

When I came home and I said to my parents, my mother was okay, because she was always, you know—

COLLINGS: She was a zealot.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, and she was kind of a little bit of a conformist by nature. She knew that it couldn't be fought, and she was very ambitious. She had a Ph.D.

degree, she was fighting for this Ph.D. degree for fifteen years, because it was not the American Ph.D. situation. For example, in my field, I was in fine arts, and it was film. In the whole country, USSR, I was the sixteenth person who received the degree. It was hard to get it. It was so difficult to get the Ph.D. degree. You had to go through lots of things, besides writing a Ph.D. degree. And you had to have a very clean CV, clean biography.

COLLINGS: Politically.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Politically, yes. So I felt all this very early.

COLLINGS: Do you think this was your dad's influence?

GOLDOVSKAYA: They were speaking pretty openly at home, especially my dad.

I don't know whether I showed you my book, but it is interesting. I don't know whether I have it here. There is a photo of my father. I think I have it. I don't know. I'll show you.

COLLINGS: Okay.

GOLDOVSKAYA: He was put to prison in 1938, when I was not born yet, but it haunted me all my life because he never told me the details, but of course I understood what happened. And what happened is that he was tortured. After he had been released from KGB prison, he didn't sleep for the rest of his life. He died very young. He was only sixty-eight. But he was a very strong man. He had a fantastic brain, clean, clear, but his heart was very weak— As he couldn't sleep. He never had enough sleep.

COLLINGS: He couldn't sleep because he was traumatized?

GOLDOVSKAYA: He spent five and a half months in KGB cells, and he was not allowed to sleep. He was sitting in a prison cell alone, in a small room, and during the night it was impossible to fall asleep because of the interrogations and screams coming from everywhere. And during the daytime, the guards were looking in the key hole, and when they saw that the person in the cell falling asleep, they woke him up— So my father didn't sleep for five and a half months, and, of course, can you imagine what kind of—

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: He came out, he was thirty-five years old, he had not a single tooth. He told me that. So it was enough, he told me these two things, it was enough to understand what he went through. I never risked to ask him, because for me it was not that I was afraid to ask, I knew how it would traumatize him and I didn't want him to feel humiliated that he was tortured and his daughter would know the details. I didn't want it.

COLLINGS: So you didn't know what he had been imprisoned for?

GOLDOVSKAYA: I knew. I knew a lot but now I know everything. In 1937, my father was appointed deputy minister of film business, cinemas. He became deputy minister in 1937. By this time he was already well known. He was probably the biggest specialist in film technology in the country. He created, or was one of the creators of the sound system. He founded, together with [Sergei] Eisenstein, the State Film School, which was the film school which I graduated from later. He was running the biggest research division of the Research Institute of Film Technology. Then it

became a separate institute, which he chaired, he was a research chair of it, the brain of the institute. So he was already very well established. He wrote already, by this time, maybe thirty-five books. At the end of his life, he had ninety-two books published. Two of them I edited after he passed away. So he was very well known.

Then in 1937, I think, or '36—this it cannot tell you; I don't remember now—he was appointed deputy minister. The minister, his name was {Boris Zakharovitch} Shumiatsky. Shumiatsky was a very smart man and a Bolshevik who was a very zealous communist, a real communist, and with a very strong will. He knew what he was fighting for. There was this category of believers, he was one of them, very merciless, as Trotsky, who also was merciless. You know, many of them were merciless, and they thought, as I put it as an epigraph for my film, *Solovky Power*, "We will bring mankind to happiness with an iron hand." So this was this type of a person. Extremely knowledgeable. And he turned to be too independent for Stalin. At first he appointed him, but then very quickly he felt that it is too independent a man and he didn't need such a man. Stalin was a censor of all the films himself. He read all the scripts.

COLLINGS: Himself?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Himself. Everything. Because Lenin said in 1922 or '23, "The most important of all arts is cinema."

Stalin repeated, "The most important and the most mass."

So for them, as there was no television, film was a tool of creating Soviet mythology. Naturally, I was teaching this course when I came here.

So then what happened is Shumiatsky was starting to become more independent, and the more Stalin acknowledged it—Stalin was also going through different stages of madness, because he was definitely mentally damaged.

COLLINGS: Demagoguery, perhaps.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, you know, I think that he was a sick person. Oh, I'm sure he was. When he died, he was a completely madman. It was madness. I don't know whether Hitler was mad, probably also had some, *tarakany* [cockroaches], as we say in Russia, the bugs. But Stalin definitely was. He was not a normal human being, definitely. He had some kind of a perversion in him, and there are lots of things that convince us; how he behaved with his wife, who he loved, and she committed suicide—Or maybe even he killed her. Nobody knows. How he, himself, killed Bukharin. It's not a normal way of dealing with any issue. You can do it, for example, because you feel it's needed, but to enjoy killing and torturing—I don't think it's normal.

Anyway, the minister, he became too independent, as I said, and on the thirty-first of December, 1937, during this big evening party, or celebration of the new year, [We usually celebrate the New Year in the night of the thirty-first of December and first of January] there was a toast in the Kremlin. All the ministers were drinking for Stalin, everybody, as much as they could were licking his ass, and Shumiatsky was the only one who did not drink for his health.

COLLINGS: Oh, that was reckless.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And it was too much. On the sixth of January, he was put to prison. On the thirteenth of March, my father was put to prison. So during this month and a half, they created ["a plot"] an affair, as if there was a terrorist organization who tried to assassinate Stalin. Now I know everything about it. My father didn't, because—

COLLINGS: It was all secret.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —it was all secret. But I was given my father's KGB file when I was making a film. I went to KGB. It was a window when you could do it, it was in the beginning of the 90s; not anymore. So I came there and I asked for my father's file, and I got it and I read it, me and my son, and it was— I still can start crying now, so please forgive me. Because I put pieces of the story together and I have a picture of what happened, which my father didn't have. He had only little—

COLLINGS: Fragments.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —fragments of the mirror. So what happened is that they decided— Yes, the idea was to accuse this group of an attempt to assassinate Stalin. At this time, at this moment, there was a theater being built in the Kremlin for the members of the Politburo of the Communist Party, and Stalin always was watching all the films with them. And after the screening, he used to say to the minister of the cinema, "Cut this out. Cut this out." [So they were building this theater—.]

COLLINGS: They were building the cinema.

GOLDOVSKAYA: The cinema. There were a couple of people who were working there installing the projection system and the sound system, and my father had to sign

the documents because he was the chair of all the technology. So a day before the seventh of November, the sixth, when they tested the equipment a lamp exploded, which is normal. It was a mercury lamp. It's normal. So the technicians changed the lamp.

[After Shumiatsky was put to prison, the KGB officers created this story of a plot. They said that] the lamp was specially broken, the lamp in order to poison all the members of the Politburo, and they were all Japanese spies. The group was fulfilling an order from the Japanese. My father, who I am sure until the sixties had never seen a Japanese man—we didn't have them in Russia—he became, a Japanese spy. So it took them a month and a half to create this legend, and seven people were seized. My father was the last one to be taken. One of them was the sound engineer of Dziga Vertov on *Enthusiasm*—it was his first sound film. Six people in that group signed all the documents. They couldn't probably—

COLLINGS: They "confessed," quote, unquote, to everything.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They confessed and they said, yes, they were approached by Shumiatsky and by Goldovsky, by my father. They were tortured, they couldn't stand it and they confessed. Including Shumiatsky; probably he was tortured more than anybody else. And my father didn't sign anything. I don't know how he managed. I don't know, really. I don't know how he could— He told me about one little meeting, the last interrogation that he had. He was called, and Shumiatsky, the minister, and when Shumiatsky walked in, my father was already in the room and the investigator was sitting there. Shumiatsky came in and my father didn't recognize him. He said he

was completely— You know, he was not him. His eyes were of a mad person with no expression, and he sits down, he looks at my father and started looking on the floor. And all the questions, "Did Goldovsky— Did you make him sign this? Did you tell him to do that?"

Everything, "Yes, yes, yes."

And my father was sitting listening and then suddenly he blew, exploded. He said, "Boris Zakharovitch what are you talking about? We never had this conversation. I don't believe that you could ever think that way. I don't believe that you spoke to anybody about that. You are not this type of a man. Why do you do that? Why are you killing yourself?" my father said.

And suddenly, he told me, Shumiatsky lifted his eyes, looked at my father, and there was kind of a, you know, sober, serious look for a second. He looked at my dad, then bent his head, and continued to say, 'Yes, yes, yes.'"

So my father continued to say, "No, no, no," didn't sign anything, refused to sign. He was taken to his cell, and silence; nothing happened for a whole month or so. In a month, at five-thirty in the morning he was called.

COLLINGS: That's not a good hour.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Not a good hour. So five-thirty in the morning, "Goldovsky, take your things, and follow me."

He went out of the cell and thought that that it's at the end. When he entered the room of the investigator, the investigator stood up, came to him, shook his hand, and said, "Comrade Goldovsky, we have to apologize. You are innocent. "Sign," and

he was given a document to sign that he would never speak about a document, what he went through here, what he saw, what happened in the cells of hubianka. So he never spoke about it openly, but somehow he was pretty brave. I'm amazed that— He usually spoke, I heard these conversations, he hinted at certain things. He never said anything directly, but it was clear when he talked to Eisenstein. Eisenstein asked him, "How was it?" Because Eisenstein was all the time expecting the same thing to happen to him.

My father told him, "It has nothing to do with a resort."

So that was the story, and of course, this was sitting in me, and it's still sitting in me, and that's why my relationship with my country is very complicated. When the changes started— Of course, I'm kind of a patriot. Not patriot, but I love my country. You know, I grew up with this. But what I hate in this country is KGB.

COLLINGS: Yes, I can certainly— I'm going to flip—

TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

JUNE 1, 2004

COLLINGS: Why was your father finally declared innocent?

GOLDOVSKAYA: That's a very good question. You see, you're asking me the right questions.

When I left KGB after reading the file, I ask this person, "Please, could you investigate who was left out of this group? What happened to the other members?"

He called me in a couple of days and said, "All of them were assassinated. They all signed that they were right."

So what happened? My father was the only one [inaudible]. Why? Because for that you have to— You know, it's very difficult. Russian history is absolutely inexplicable. There was a good poem by Tiutchev, [recites poem in Russian]. It means you cannot understand Russia with your brain; you can only believe in it. So it's impossible to understand this country.

What happened is that Stalin, it was— My father was born— As he said, "I was born in a shirt." Such an expression when you are lucky. He was put to prison in March '38. In August '38, the old KGB leader, Minister Nickolai Yejov, a little peasant guy, bastard, you know, who killed so many people, he was accused of being an enemy of the people. It was this thread.

COLLINGS: Everybody gets it at some point, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. So his time came. He was put to prison in August '39, when my father was let out. And another person was appointed, and it was [Lavrentiy] Beria, the last KGB minister, who was Georgian. Stalin was trying to put Georgians around, because he was Georgian himself. And it was a terrible, terrible bastard, terrible man, Beria. Better than usual. I just like him more because he let my father out. And when he came, he had to prove that Yejov put to prison innocent people. So a certain amount of people who didn't sign anything, who had the guts not to sign, they were let out. I don't know how many. Some people say that it's around a thousand. Some people say that it's maybe ten thousand. Some people say that it was less. Nobody knows. Nobody counted, you know. On the whole, sixty million people perished during Stalin, including the war.

COLLINGS: So your father *was* born in a shirt.

GOLDOVSKAYA: He was born in a shirt, and especially there were certain details of this story. Can I tell you one?

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Because it's a really fun detail. My father had an aunt and an uncle, an uncle whose wife came from a very rich family from Odessa, and she had lots of jewelry. She had a lot. I do remember it because I bought some from her. So she told my father— No, my father just got an apartment in this house for the filmmakers and he moved with his mother. He was not married yet. By the way, my mother, she wasn't married to my father then, and they were just dating or I don't know, maybe just acquainted, and she brought him food to prison, which was, when I

learned about it, it was a brave act. She never told me about it. I learned about it from other people after she passed away. It was a big thing, you know, to go to prison.

So this woman, the aunt, she lived in a town near Moscow, a small town, lived in a communal apartment, and she was surrounded by workers, peasants, you know, uneducated drunkards who were robbers, too, and she was always afraid that she would be robbed. So she came when my parents— Because my father and his mother, they just moved from a communal apartment into a separate three-bedroom. By this time it was a huge apartment, because this top— So she came and she said, "You know, I am afraid that they will rob me. Can I leave it?"

And my grandmother said, "Well, of course. Put it here," and she put it under my father's office table.

So of course there were KGB people who came to check everything and everything. After that, they sealed the door so that nobody could get in. When my father opened the door, everything was in complete mess, and he saw the little bag and he said, "What is this?"

She said, "Oh, it's my cousin, Marusia Podolsk, from— She asked to keep it here."

My father took it out and put it on the table, opened it. It was full of jewelry and golden things, and he said, "I'm born in a shirt," because if they would find them, that would be the proof that I was—

COLLINGS: That would be it. That would be the payment for the scheme.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, because it was when the Soviet power came and everything was nationalized, it was an order from the government to give everything you have to the government, because the country was so poor. So it was illegal and that means— So that's the story.

COLLINGS: You said that your mother was quite a zealot and a conformist of a sort, but she also wanted to support your father in prison.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. Well, you know, nothing is black and white. Everything has its shades. And to understand my mother, I don't. Practically I think I was also a conformist to a certain extent, because I did enter the Party. I didn't know that it was so bad at the time, because when I entered the Party I was young. I was twenty-five, and I said, "Yes."

My father told me— I came home I said, "You know, I was approached."

He said, "Well, what did you say?"

I said, "I said, 'Yes.'"

He said, "Are you crazy?"

I said, "What do you mean?"

And he told me a joke, you know. A man was walking and he stepped into shit. Excuse me. You step into that and you have it on your—

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And the question, "Did you enter the party?"

"Me? The party? Where?" Now, this was a joke.

I said, "What do you mean?" Because at this moment it was the years of thaw. It was still '66, and we had this feeling that the country's moving somewhere and that we can have socialism with a human face.

And he said, "And you believe in it?"

I said, "What do I have to do not to believe?"

He said, "Well, I wouldn't do that." But he was not pushy. He didn't say, "Don't do that," you know. So he left it for me to decide.

I felt that if I will save them.... It will mean that all the doors will be closed and I will not have— And there was really a kind of— You know, I was so full of dreams and aspirations that I wanted to work and I loved the profession. I loved the studio. I was so much in it, you know. I'm still crazy about my profession, but then I was completely, completely. So I decided, well, we'll see.

Actually I'm a person who's taking these quick decisions, intuitive decisions, without giving it really serious thought, and sometimes it brings me a lot of problems because I have to get out of it. I usually was lucky to get out of them.

For example, I was approached, "Do you want to make this film?" And something told me, "Do this film, yes." And I would say yes, and then when I started working, "Oh, god, why did I do that?" But you know, while you are struggling, you are doing it. So on the whole, I don't feel sorry for doing it, but I know it is my weak point of my character. I'm not a calculative person; I don't calculate anything. And I thought, "Oh yes, because this, probably it's okay."

And everybody said, "Oh, you are a member of the Party." It was important for me at this moment. I was a woman. It was impossible to make your way in this profession being a woman. Impossible. I was the only woman. When I was a student at the film school, I was the only cinematographer woman. They didn't want anybody. I knew that I'd have a problem. Nobody wanted to— The directors didn't want to work with women cinematographers.

So I decided if they don't want to work with me, I made the film in '69, which was very big success, and I got a first prize at the festival. I took this moment and I made a film as a director. They respected me for that. They gave me this opportunity, and I started to work as a director and I became a director. Of course, you know, that, being a woman, I had so much problems. How many problems?

Men, they said, "You're not a director. You never got this education. You are not trained as a director." Men cinematographers said, "Why are you going into directing? You are not a director. You're a cinematographer. You know, you are too ambitious." Maybe they didn't say that, because actually people liked me. I am not a bitch, you know. I have a pretty tolerant character and I never did anything bad to anybody. So they elected me the president of the cameraman's council. I was representing camera people and I had this one degree I took, a master's. It was not a master's; it was in between the Ph.D., and then the Ph.D. So I was a spokesman for the camera people. I was quite— So I cannot say I was not kind of an outcast, not at all, not at all, but still it was very hard to prove that I am not worse than a man.

COLLINGS: But for them to be saying this about you as a woman was against the Soviet ideals at that time. Were people quite free in expressing these attitudes or was it more veiled?

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, it was more veiled, but it was probably the only thing that you could say as if with humor. I remember my friend, with whom we went to the film school, he was a little bit older, and he was a good director. His name was Aliosha Gabrilovitch. I said, "Aliosha, I want to make a film with you. I want to be your camera person on this film."

He said, "I don't work with women. Your place is in the kitchen." That's what he said in a very rude way. We were friends. And he even tried to court me, you know. He liked women a lot. I was not interested at all, you know.

But I said, "[Are you crazy? How can you talk to me like that?"] I took it seriously.

And he laughed about it. He said, "Well, I'm joking, but I prefer to work with men." [I know why he didn't want to work with me.] It's easier to work with men, you can curse, you can drink. I didn't drink. So it was more in such a playful way, joking.

COLLINGS: Did you know other women of your age, perhaps women that you had gone to school with, who were going into professions that were not, you know, stereo—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. All women, they had more difficulties to make their way in the profession.

COLLINGS: You were probably part of a vanguard generation in that sense.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, you know, I think that it started to happen. In United States it started to happen, the women's human rights movement at the end of sixties, and in Russia it happened in the twenties, because they were liberated [by the 1817 Revolution] and women went into different professions. So officially it was you could really get any job. Officially. You couldn't be rejected. You couldn't be told, "You're a woman, no." The salaries were the same. There was no discrimination. Theoretically a woman could become a pilot, you know, anybody, but in the army, not in the military. In the army they didn't take women. It was not the woman's game, saying that women have to be protected. But in any other field, it was possible to make your way.

But if you were, for example, at the Moscow University, the Department of Theoretical Physics, there was one woman in the whole group, so they could say, "You see, we are taking women, but they are not going into this profession. Probably they are not smart enough." That was the point. Actually this woman was— We went to the same school together.

In the film school, there were women actresses, there were women— It was not difficult to get into the film school. Actually, most of the people were put into the film school because their parents were in film. [It depended very much on your connections.]

COLLINGS: Yes, a lot of nepotism.

GOLDOVSKAYA: A lot. There were, of course, people from the village, peasants, because it was always— It was always to report, "You see, we have workers, we have peasants, that we have some representatives from the intelligentsia. We even have some Jews." That was the idea. But the main thing was that they were restricted. It was so funny, actually. For example, Jewish people, they were not accepted to the film school. It was pretty impossible. All these Jews who were there, they were either covered—

COLLINGS: They were what?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Covered Jews, you know. Very funny things. For example, the father was Jewish, the mother was Italian. So when the time came for their kids to get the passport, they came to the police, bribe the policeman, and the policeman said, "Well, to be Italian in Russia, it's not a good idea. It's a foreigner."

COLLINGS: No foreigners.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Foreigners, no. No foreigners, no. "Jewish it's even worse. You will be discriminated—." He didn't say that, but it was clear, because Jews were always guilty of everything. "So we'll put Russian." So a combination of Jew and Italian could give a pure Russian [inaudible].

COLLINGS: At the right price. [laughs]

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. That was— You know, everybody knew that. And the funny thing was, I don't know how it happened, everybody somehow managed to bribe police and suddenly they were not Jewish but they were Jewish. I knew they were Jewish and they joked about it. But there were many Jews, you know, half Jews. It

was all counted, half, a quarter, one-sixteenth, absolutely the German way. Everything was clear. They knew, in KGB they knew, but they kind of closed their eyes for certain things. They pretended not to know sometimes, you know. For example, if a person was very talented, it was possible to become a Russian. They knew and they would—For example, [Andre] Sakharov. Sakharov. You know Sakharov.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was so funny, he was not Jewish, but when he became a dissident, KGB spread the rumor that his name was not Sakharov but Zuckerman. What is German for sugar?

COLLINGS: *Zucker*?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Zuckerman. They said, "Sakharov. It's not Sakharov. It's Zuckerman and he is Jewish."

Immediately when somebody was kind of with a stain, stain on the reputation, immediately. So Solzhenitsyn, oh no, his last name is Solzhenitsyn, but he is Aleksandr Isayevich. Isayevich is the name of the father. Isayevich is a Jewish name. So again, rumors were spread that Solzhenitsyn was Jewish. He was not Jewish. Actually, he's an anti-Semite, a nationalist.

But this is the way it functioned. Some of my friends weren't very clever. We had a KGB guy who was responsible for our—We knew that every third one in our department, division was a KGB guy, because I worked for the Central Television. We were shooting in the Kremlin, you know, all the time. So we had these people who were watching, and one of them, he was a production manager, [he used to be an

officer in the military before he started working at the TV studio. His name was Sergey Schepkin] and he told me all this. "You are such a nice person, in spite of what you— You don't look like Jewish at all." And this was the highest appreciation. I start crying when I tell you that. It hurt so much.

COLLINGS: Yes. So it sounds like this was a larger issue for you than the gender issue, would you say so?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Oh, right. Yes.

COLLINGS: That was like nothing in comparison.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Gender issue, I didn't care for. It was nothing. [Crying.] Excuse me.

COLLINGS: That's okay.

GOLDOVSKAYA: This was a big deal. It was a horrible issue because, you know, I didn't tell you the whole history of our great country, but anti-Semitism was a horrible thing, and my father probably— Excuse me, please.

COLLINGS: That's all right. Do you want me to turn off the tape recorder?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, no, no. I'm fine. [inaudible]. You know, it was an issue because kind of we were born with it, and my father was always telling me since I was little kid, he told me, "You have to be the best. It's cold when you go. You have to be the best and you have to be a good person, because whatever happens, they will tell you you're a kike, and you have to be ready for this."

COLLINGS: Wow, what a horrible burden for a child.

GOLDOVSKAYA: When I was seven, I went to school, before even. I was born in '41, so in '47 anti-Semitism started, very strong anti-Semitism, and we were waiting in '52 to be— I didn't know that, my mother knew about that and my father, of course, he knew, they were waiting to be exiled, and probably it would be the final decision of the Jewish question, as Hitler did. Everything was prepared. The trains were standing prepared to take us out. That happened with all these Caucasians. Caucasians, not in American sense, but from the Caucasus. Chechen people, Ingush people. Tartars from the Crimea. Everybody was expelled from their countries in '43. Koreans from the Sakhalin Island. And most of them perished, perished under way.

What they did, they usually took the people out and threw them out in the steppe, and it happened usually in late fall when it is cold and people couldn't survive, you know. My father later said that they were waiting, and now I find lots of documents about it now; it's written.

So when I was six, five, six, the anti-Semitism started. Our house was a house of filmmakers, so they never could say that, because three-quarters of them were Jewish. Most famous filmmakers were all Jewish. I don't know why. I don't understand why. The musicians, mathematicians, they were all— I don't know why, but probably their energy was all gone into, as, [before 1917], they were not allowed to [live in big cities and get good education], be doctors during— It was genetically, probably. They lived in little *shtetls*. They were not allowed to live in capitals. So probably this energy was all kind of directed into art, into things that didn't need

official kind of appreciation. [Marc] Chagall, for example. You know, if I start telling you the names of the Russian Jewish—

COLLINGS: Painters and artists, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They're all Jewish, most of them, many of them. Not most, but many. And filmmakers, we had tons of them. Vertov. Dziga Vertov was Jewish. Alexander Medvedkin was not Jewish, great filmmaker, my closest friend. But they, of course, were not anti-Semitic, or most of them were not.

But there were little houses around our house and there were lots of kids there, and I played with these kids, and then I started hearing that [Russian word for kike], "kike." When I went to school, it was there.

COLLINGS: This was the English school that you went to?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. No, there was no English school at the time. It was a Russian school. So, you know, it was very unpleasant.

Then in 1952 the affair of the doctors— You know this?

COLLINGS: No, I don't.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was in 1952, at first, it was the last [Stalin's crime]. I'm now reading a book written by the daughter of one of these people, and actually I want to make a film about it. These doctors, they were treating the members of the Politburo, and they were accused of plots trying to assassinate members of Politburo. Thirteen people were put to prison, and only the death of Stalin, who was completely mad already, one was beaten to death and twelve were released. The next day after Stalin

died, they were kind of free. Their families were approached and called and said, "Don't worry, they will soon be with you." So that happened.

In 1948, it was the beginning of the big anti-Semitic campaign, when the Anti-Fascist Committee was accused of Zionist ties, and Solomon Mikhoels, for example, who was the president of this committee, he was a great Jewish actor. This committee was created, this hypocritical side of Stalin, the evil side, they created this committee in 1942, when the country was completely under danger of being completely destroyed. They created this Jewish committee because they went to Jews of America to get financial and other support. And this Anti-Fascist Committee, it was called Anti-Fascist, they did so much to save the country from famine. And then they were all accused of Zionist ties and all of them were killed. All of them. There were probably a couple of thousands of people, the main writers, the main artists, the main theater directors, they were all exterminated and it was the beginning of this campaign.

I remember— Can I tell you one more thing?

COLLINGS: Yes, please.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, [Solomon] Mikhoels, he was the art manager of the Jewish theater. My mother worked for him in 1939, because she was a theater Ph.D. person, and she was the chair of the literary department handling his plays, handling the repertoire. He came from Odessa, and he told her, "Anti-Semitism is starting," in '39, because of the ties with Germany. Before that, it was not so evident.

Actually, it started in 1936 when the passports [were established]. There were no passports before 1936, but in 1936 the passports were given to everybody and there

was number, point, number five, your nationality, Jewish. So it's written in the papers you are Jewish. So it started in '36, but then it started to unfold and grow, and Mikhoels who was this great, great, great [director and actor]. He played King Lear. He was the greatest of all existing Jewish actors playing in Yiddish. But he was a real intellectual. He was not only a Jewish actor; he was renown.

In 1947, when this affair of the Anti-Fascist Committee started, he was sent to Minsk to see a play with another person who was a KGB guy. They went there, and there at night he got a telephone call, and they had to go to somebody, it's not clear to whom. They went out of the hotel, and the very same moment a car smashed him over the wall and there was nothing left. [slaps hands] It was just like that, him and this second man.

He was brought to Moscow in two days in a coffin, and my mother— I remember that very well. It was '47, '48? '48 probably. I was sick. I remember my mother said, "I'm going to meet the coffin to the railway station and we'll go to the mourning ceremony."

And my father said, "Are you crazy? Don't go. Don't go. Do you understand what it is?"

She didn't. And she went with her friend, and they went, and I remember them discussing it, and then it was already clear that it was an assassination. This was the beginning. It gave the [green] light to the whole campaign, a whole bunch of people, many sons and daughters of these people who were my friends. So that's—

COLLINGS: This is very haunting for you and your growing up then.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, it was. It was. It was a very big imprint and that's why probably the whole life that I lived I knew I have to be the best, I have to do that, I have to do that.

COLLINGS: But at the same time you believed— You were a supporter of the Soviet idea of sort of uplifting all of the members of the society. It sounds like sort of two very contradictory truths that you were holding in your mind.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Absolutely. It was a very duel— But it was the reality of Russian Soviet times. You were thinking one thing, you were doing another thing, and you were behaving in a third way. It was triple consciousness.

[tape recorder off]

COLLINGS: So when you were growing up, aside from what you were being taught in school about what the Soviet system could do for the country at large, did you observe any instances where people's lives were improved?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, yes, of course. There were lots of things that I am still ecstatic about. I'm going now to Russia, and I compare, actually, compare Russia all the time, because now it's no good. Now it's completely—

COLLINGS: Right. Now things are in chaos.

GOLDOVSKAYA: But even when you compare things here in Russia of my childhood, my youth, I can tell you that there were lots of things which were better than here. For example, healthcare. Everybody could have healthcare. It was free. Some doctors were no good, but some doctors were very good. Of course, I grew up in a privileged group of people and the kind of elite. That's why I had a good— But it

was not only that, no, it was a good, not hospital, but it was kind of medical building where I had a good doctor. I could choose the one that I wanted. There were lots of good doctors. They were taking their work very seriously, in spite of not being well paid. Very good doctors.

For example, I never had surgery, but my son had, and even when he was in the hospital, the conditions in the hospital were very poor. You didn't have a separate room; there were four or five people in our room. When I gave birth to my son, there were ten other women in there. But at the same time, the doctors were good. If you could pay the nurse, you could get clean sheets. So, ambivalent. Healthcare was good.

If I had temperature, fever, I would never go to the doctor myself, and here I have to go. I don't go. I never took a sick leave for the twelve years I've work here. I never took a sick leave. When I'm sick, I'm going to work, but that never happened in Russia. If I feel bad, I call the doctor, the doctor is coming to me the very same day. I get a sick leave. I don't go until I am completely well, and sometimes I could even—- I didn't feel so bad, but I knew I better take a sick leave and work in my edit room so that nobody knows about that. But I kind of—

COLLINGS: You recover.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So it was a different medical system. It was very good and the doctors were good, good, good. I cannot say anything bad about them. There were some lousy doctors, but here too.

COLLINGS: Sure.

GOLDOVSKAYA: But this was a different story. Here, you know, not long ago I had this terrible noise in my ear, and my friends told me, "You better go to the emergency," because it's nine o'clock in the evening. I went, I spent there three hours, four hours. They gave me a pill of Tylenol. I said, "I have my own Tylenol. I don't need yours." And they said everything is fine, which was not right. I know that it is not right, because the next day I went to my friends and they told me it was a spasm, you needed this and this and this.

Then I got the bill and it was $369. For what? For waiting there four hours. Of course, I didn't pay this money; I have insurance. But it was written $359.

So that was one good thing. The other good thing was schools. The schools were pretty good. The education was very good. Institutes had very good education. Every year you could send your son or your daughter to a camp. My son didn't like it, didn't like to be with children, so I didn't do it. But I could, and he didn't have to spend the summer at home in the apartment, and then I didn't need to take care of him during— To stay at home, I couldn't. So it was a big thing and you didn't have to pay anything. You could send your child to the Crimea, to the Caucasus, to the best camps for nothing, for peanuts. It cost very little.

Then what else? Every year I had twenty-eight days of rest, and it was paid. I could go anywhere and I would pay peanuts to have a good sanitarium. So there were such things. I feel that here people are not taken good care of, you know.

So what can I say? There were no, what is it called, preposition about the minorities. Officially there were none, of course, but—

COLLINGS: So when you were growing up, you were sort of looking around and observing that people whose circumstances would previously have been very limited without education, without healthcare, were actually moving forward and—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. Then I had this experience at the film school, because when I was in Moscow school everybody was from Moscow, but poor, poor kids also entered school, from poor families. But in the film school there were a couple of people from little villages, very talented people. One of them became a classic, you know. They were receiving tuition. I never received tuition because we had enough money in the family. But if you had less than 600 rubles per person, you could get tuition, you could get free housing, everything was free. You could get some money from the government. It was great, I think.

But there were other things which were horrible. Censorship and—

TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

JUNE 1, 2004

COLLINGS: The joke.

GOLDOVSKAYA: The joke goes, I look in the mirror and think who or what these two are is an informer [a spy, a secret police agent].

COLLINGS: That's a good one. [Laughs]

GOLDOVSKAYA: It speaks for itself. Every third one, especially in television, every third or maybe even second, I cannot tell you. Because I had this— My guts told me, "Don't talk to this guy." Not talk to him. "Don't be too open." Sometimes you want to say something. I remember a friend of mine [Yura Petrenko], we went to school together, to the film school, and I didn't think he was an informer, but he was going abroad all the time. You know, people who were going abroad, yes. I was never sent abroad. I was sent abroad later. But I don't think about it, because he was too big a friend of mine. I told him— I couldn't hold it because it was so funny, and I told him, and he suddenly looked at me and didn't even smile, and I thought, "Oh, here you are." And I said to myself, "I'm in trouble." But nothing happened. Because we were friends he probably decided not to denounce on me.

There was also a good joke which also tells a lot about the system. There were two main newspapers in the country, *Izvestia*, which is "news" in Russian, and *Pravda*, which is "truth." So the joke went: there is no news in the truth and there is no truth in the news.

COLLINGS: So when you were growing up, and when you were a young woman and you understood this situation, was there a sense that this was just a necessary growing— These were necessary growing pains? This was something that one needed to live through in a society in order to get to the more sort of idealized Soviet—

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. When I was a child, I absorbed everything I was told by the teachers, and it was from '48 I went to school, from the age of seven, and it was until '56, when the Party Congress, Khrushchev's famous speech about Stalin's crimes. So it was the years when you are being formed.

Then, of course, it was a shock. It's so funny, the fifth of March, 1953, when Stalin died, and I saw, from our window, these red flag with black frames, and it was very early in the morning and I ran into my parents' room, my father was still in bed, and I cried, "Mother, Daddy, Stalin died."

And suddenly my dad said, "Thank God this bastard is *sdokh*." It's a word which was used; I don't know even the equivalent.

COLLINGS: So you had gotten up as usual and looked out the window and you had seen all of these?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, I saw, and I knew what happened, because for three days before this morning, they were preparing us. He was killed. Killed or died, nobody knows—So we were prepared.

When I saw this, I was crying, and he said, "Thank God this bastard is gone," and he was so full of hatred.

I said, "What are you talking about? How can we live without him?"

He said, "Definitely better than we did."

And this was a shock for me. It was a shock for me. But the very same morning I went to school, and I was the best student and I was honored to stand under his portrait, and I was so proud. So this is something that I will never understand, how it will—

COLLINGS: How this contradiction coexisted.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Contradiction. At the same time, you know, I felt— My parents were pretty explicit, frank talking about that. Actually, it was one of the reasons why I divorced my husband later, because I was used to very big frankness at home, because my parents never hid anything from me. They felt I should know it all. That's why it was easier for me to adjust. I knew that I cannot say certain things at work to people around, but I knew it. But I thought about it.

But my ex-husband [David Livner], the father of my son [Sergey Livner], he didn't want my son to hear that. And I said, "Why are you making an idiot out of him? He will think that it is the way it is set, and it is not." And we had this big fight, and, you know, little by little we just drifted apart. Of course, it was not the main reason.

COLLINGS: Could you describe the film house that you grew up in? Because that sounds like something very interesting. Was it a large sort of apartment building?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, it was a big apartment building. It was seven stories, seven floors. There were forty-two apartments. They were all, practically all of them were not communal, maybe two or three were communal. You know, that we had communal apartments. Most of the people did, lived in communal apartments This

house was built in 1937 especially by Stalin's order to make filmmakers happy, because "film was the most important of the whole art" as Lenin proclaimed. Mikhail Iliyich Romm lived there. [Yuli Yakovlevitch] Riezman, Boris Israilevitch Volchek, Dziga Vertov, Alexander Ivanovitch Medvedkin. All the classics of Soviet cinema, at least, most of them lived in this house. Eisenstein lived in a different house, because he became a classic before mid-30s, so he belonged to the first generation of Soviet cinema. [Olexandr] Dovzhenko used to live in our house, but then he was moved to another place in a higher rank. He got a four-room apartment. We had three-room apartments in our house. There was one entrance that had four-room apartments. Roman Karmen lived there. So our house was full of classics. Maybe classics not of Eisenstein rank, but of the next rank who were making the Soviet cinema.

COLLINGS: The Soviet popular cinema of that period, yes. Also news, newsreels and so on.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. It was called House of the Central Documentary Studio, but there were two women cinematographers, so that made me, of course, very excited about the film.

COLLINGS: Were there other children in the house?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, lots of children. Lots of children. Of my age, there were not so many. Two apartments belonged to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and on my— How do you say that? The same floor opposite me there was the ambassador to Switzerland and another ambassador to France. These were two. And the son of the ambassador of Switzerland was the closest friend of mine. We were in the same— The house was

a very interesting entity, because it was like a big communal apartment building where everybody knew each other. Before 1948, maybe even '52, I cannot now tell you, it was pretty isolated. People didn't want to mingle. I remember that we never had guests at home, only family.

COLLINGS: Why was that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: They were afraid to knock. They were called this— Guys were called informers. *Stukachi* they were called. *Stukachi* [secret police, KGB agents].

COLLINGS: So they were afraid if they had guests in that some of them might be informers?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, and definitely it was right. [In 1936/37, the Minister of Cinema, Shumiatsky built, by Stalin's order, a House of Rest. It was a little resort house in Bolshevo, a little village close to Moscow. It was maybe thirty-five, forty minutes from Moscow, in the forest. It was a house for filmmakers. So they could come for the weekend, stay there. And also those who wanted to write scripts, and directors and cinematographers, scriptwriters, they lived there for a month, for two weeks, for three weeks, for half a year, and they were working there, sometimes together.

So we were going there often. We had a country house. My father built a country house, which was confiscated in 1938 when he was arrested. He built it himself, but it was confiscated when he was put to prison. It's very funny [I] found documents of his [letter to KGB executives after he was released from prison in August 1938]: "My house was confiscated by the chairman of KGB of this district."

So it was given back to him. But we lived there only in summer because my father loved to plant trees and potatoes and tomatoes and grew it all. So during the winter we went to the filmmaker's resort. [It was nice to be there]; people, of course, joked and mingled.

COLLINGS: So things were more open there?

GOLDOVSKAYA: They were open, but definitely there were a lot of guys who were spying, you know, definitely. And the director, director of this place, it was something really shocking, you know. I will never forget this. It was 1952, so I was eleven years old, when this "affair of the doctors happened," and this was announced on the radio. It was a big thing. The whole country [was shocked by this "news"].. People stopped going to doctors who were Jewish because they said all of them are [murderers, they believed the lies, made up by KGB, by Stalin's order]. It was insane. So it was announced on the radio.

We were then at this resort house, and the director, with whom my father was friends; they were joking all the time, he came up, and I was there. He came up to my father, and I heard him say this. He said, "Your people, what are your people doing?" Your people! "What your people are doing to us?"

My father said, "What?"

"They are poisoning, your people, [Jewish people]."

COLLINGS: The Politburo.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And you know, my father said, "God," he said to my mother, "You cannot trust anybody now." [inaudible]. I still don't trust many people, you know, after going through that. I wouldn't talk to many people.

COLLINGS: Yes. No, I can imagine growing up under those conditions you would never be able to retrench from that.

So I know that when I attended one of your talks earlier you were saying that your father had not wanted you to go into film. What did he want you to do?

GOLDOVSKAYA: When I was fourteen, I learned that there is a school in Moscow which was an English school, and my parents were pretty, how to say, pretty fearless, because they had this opportunity. My father earned a pretty good salary. So I always had a governess who was teaching me English and French. At first German, it didn't sink into me because of Germany. I hated Germany, being a Russian. You know, it was all so crazy during the war and after the war, it was sinking into me, the hatred towards not only German fascists, [but towards] all Germans. So the language didn't enter into my mind.

But English and French, I was pretty good. Then I learned that there is a school. I was bored to death with the school that I had, where I went, because it was very mediocre. So I said to my mother, "I want to go to the English school."

She said, "It's crazy. It's situated in another part of the city. It will take you an hour to go one end."

I said, "Never mind. I want to go." And I went to this school. It was an elite school, of course. I didn't know that it was elite. This was at that time the only English school in Moscow.

COLLINGS: It's unusual that there would be an English school at that time, isn't it?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was unusual. It was organized in 1948 only for boys, and it was for the children of the members of Politburo, of high-up executives, ministers, all this kind [writers, artists, scientists]. Writers. So it was made for them. [Until 1956, girls and boys went to separate schools]. So it was a boys' school, and in 1958, girls could be accepted. So I tried, and there were already two girls there in the whole eighth grade where I had to go, and my English was better than theirs. I was reading Dickens in English. My English was pretty good.

COLLINGS: Had you been taking English at school?

GOLDOVSKAYA: [No, I had a governess at home.]

COLLINGS: Your governess, yes?

GOLDOVSKAYA: She was interesting. Governess.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It is interesting, here this governess— [was coming] from. She was expelled from the Institute of Foreign Languages [Liubov Pavlovna Grushina] for being French. She came from France. She was French by origin. Her French was better than English. Her English was very broken. So my pronunciation is probably very broken. I don't know. I cannot judge.

COLLINGS: No, it's okay.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It's okay. It could be better. Her French was beautiful and my French was good when I was a girl. But she was telling me, "Qu'est-ce que c'est l'anglais? C'est français cassé." "What is it, English? It's broken French." And I spoke both languages fluently. Now my French is in rubbles because I have no practice.

So I decided that I'll go to this school. And when I came I was really good, my English was pretty good, and so they took me, and it was in the end of the eighth grade. I was the third girl and then the fourth girl joined us the next year. So I graduated from two and a half years in this school where all the subjects were in English, even anatomy. It was very difficult, and in the beginning I had bad grades, and I was so upset, and my father said, "Do you see what you've ruined?"

So anyway, knowing English, taking French lessons, and taking German— I still took German then; my father insisted. He said, "You never know, you may need them."

COLLINGS: They may take over the country. You never know.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Probably my father was— He always said, "Maybe a time will come when we can leave this country." The day before he died, my mother told me, I was shooting in Siberia, I was not present, I was not there, she told me that when he had this [last heart attack which killed him], the day before he said, "They ruined my life." So he hated it. He hated the [regime]. I didn't hate the country, I didn't. I still don't. On the contrary.

COLLINGS: But you were a different generation.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I was a different generation, but his life was broken. He said, "I was such an idiot not to emigrate in time."

COLLINGS: He said that he was?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: He said it many times.

COLLINGS: Yes, about himself, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. So I think that in his mind— There were many things that he created in the Soviet film industry. He created the wide-screen [cinema, panoramic cinema, and cycloramic] system. He was the [chief engineer and a constructor]. He was invited by the French to create [these cinema formats later in 1960 in France]. And he was ready to do it because he knew how to do it, and the French said that, "You do it and you will have a house here." And he wanted it. I knew he wanted it. And the Soviet government didn't allow that, so he didn't do it in France.

He started going abroad, he started going abroad very early. In '55 he went to Germany, and he came he was completely— He was in Germany in '45, in '45 because he was sent to take out the equipment when the country—

COLLINGS: Collapsed, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And before that, he was also in France and he got this photograph [of Louis Lumière, the inventor of the cinema] with a dedication to him, which I keep, and a book by the first cinematographer, Flex Mesquich, the cinematographer of the Lumière brothers, which I keep, and when I retire I'll give it to the film school.

COLLINGS: Wonderful.

GOLDOVSKAYA: [While traveling], he saw that there is a different life and a different world. Of course, I think he was—

COLLINGS: A different world in the sense of being more open politically?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. Then he was very— You know, he was very kind of entrepreneurish. He knew how to do things, and I think that he felt that he's not realizing his—

COLLINGS: He was held back by the bureaucracy, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. Then all the time he didn't feel safe. All the time, because from his arrest in 1938, he was waiting to be arrested all the time, until 1953. Then they never could go [abroad on a trip together with my mother].

COLLINGS: Because they might stay.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They might stay in spite of me being here. It was all the time this fear of KGB. So he was, of course, sick and tired of that.

COLLINGS: Well, you were talking about how you were at the English school and he didn't want you to be a cinematographer. What did he want you to be?

GOLDOVSKAYA: He wanted me to be a— He thought that I would be a good philologist or work with languages—

COLLINGS: He didn't want you to be in film because he felt that there was too much government control there?

GOLDOVSKAYA: He felt that it's not a profession for women. He told me, "You will never have a family. You will be unhappy in your private life." He knew all the

camera women, there were maybe three or four, and they all had ruined lives, because when they traveled, their family life was completely messed up. So he didn't want me to go there and the more he said "no," the more I said "yes."

COLLINGS: But it sounds like in so many other ways you were a very good daughter with all of the language study and working hard in school. So I guess this is just another one of your contradictions. [laughs]

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. But it was such an attractive, such a romanticized profession for me. It was also very Soviet education, because there were— The cinematographers, the cameramen, who lived in our house, most of them went to war. And for me, I was so patriotic, to give your life for your motherland— I was reading all these books full of bullshit. Actually, I don't think that it was all in vain. Americans are also very patriotic. I think it's a good thing to kind of like your country, love your country, to be ready to sacrifice, maybe not life, but you know, give everything you have to your country and to your people. You know, that sits in me. It still sits in me.

COLLINGS: Yes. But you were just saying that you feel like they weren't telling the truth about what the country was.

GOLDOVSKAYA: This was the contradiction, because in words it was all very persuasive. Maybe the books I was reading, they were written by talented people. For example, I even brought them here with me. I want my grandson to read it and to understand what it is. What we are a people went through, to understand our

experiences, it was so romantic, it was so beautiful, it was so full of this revolutionary romanticism.

COLLINGS: Well, that's why I was asking you if you felt that the negative experiences, the things that you were seeing, the things that had happened to your family, the notion of the informers and so on, if you felt that this sort of lived experience was just a kind of a temporary stumbling block on the way to—

GOLDOVSKAYA: I started— I thought in the beginning that it was what you said, but very soon, when I— Actually in '68, all my illusions—

COLLINGS: With Czechoslovakia.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. They completely were destroyed. Then I remember this feeling of falling into a precipice, [after years of hope for a better future] between 1956 and 1968. These were years of thaw. Sometimes it was a feeling that, we are moving towards a better future.

COLLINGS: "We're going to the moon."

GOLDOVSKAYA: "We're going to the moon," yes. Gagarin, first cosmonaut [in the world]. We didn't know anything about the crisis, by the way, American crisis, the Cuban [Missile] Crisis. We knew nothing about it. We knew nothing. My father was listening.

COLLINGS: A shortwave radio?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, a shortwave radio. And I started listening also with him somewhere in the mid-sixties.

COLLINGS: Was that dangerous?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was very dangerous, so he didn't want me to do it. He had a little radio. He made it himself.

COLLINGS: Were there a lot of people who had those that you knew of?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Many people, yes. Some people had them even before, when Stalin was alive, and we didn't have, because—

COLLINGS: That was just too risky.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was too risky, taking into consideration my father's situation, when he was expecting to be put to prison again, because he was fulfilling an order by Stalin which expired in May '53. I remember him saying, "When my contract expires, it may repeat again," because he was doing some stuff, military stuff.

So, again, about religion, you asked me.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I don't know about my father, I don't think he was religious, but he was brave enough that during— What do you call it? I'm not religious at all. I have no religious education and I'm not— How you call it? Passa?

COLLINGS: Passover?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Passover. Passover. Passover. He managed to bring matzoh home. Where from? I don't know, but we had matzoh.

COLLINGS: Every year?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Every year. Also my mother, we had a maid, because my mother was working and my father was working, to keep the house. She was from Byelorussia, a very nice woman, and she prepared Jewish food. [laughs] So it was

fish, it was something else. So the only thing that came from this transition, probably, was this food and matzoh.

But my father never went to the synagogue. There was one synagogue in the whole city. And he was right, because one director, who was a friend of mine, I considered him to be my friend, he's still alive, [after "Perestroika" started, he created a film about KGB during the Soviet time. The footage he used in the film was made with the usage of surveillance cameras.] So there was all the time cameras recording people entering the synagogue. My father knew it, he knew it.

COLLINGS: Regarding the maid, given that this was the Soviet Union, were the wages for the maid prescribed by the government?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No.

COLLINGS: Was this a sort of a kind of a— I mean, it just doesn't seem very Soviet to have a maid.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Actually, many people had maids. It was not difficult. Sometimes in communal apartments old women who had hardly money to survive, they helped and they received peanuts, but they were fed, they were taken care of if they felt ill. A lot of children grew up with these old people who came from very intelligent, intellectual families, so that they absorbed a lot from them. Being peasant families, they absorbed a lot from this aristocracy.

COLLINGS: This disenfranchised aristocracy.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So there was this type of maid. One maid who lived with us was from somewhere, suburbs of Moscow, and she came when I was quite little.

Danyasha. She was a fantastic woman. She was starving in the village and she ran away without a passport. So my father had to bribe a policeman to get a passport for her and she lived with me, we lived in one room, because we had three rooms only. She prepared food, she did everything, and all the money she earned she sent to her relatives to the country. So she was fed. My mother gave her all the time clothes. She was in good conditions and she received pretty good wages. It depended on the people. She got pretty good.

COLLINGS: I was wondering, because as you were saying, the formal women's liberation was in the twenties, and you always hear about daycare, the availability of daycare, and the other question is, well, what about the housework? And that's why I was wondering if this was a sort of a cadre, in the Soviet sense of people who performed housework? Because if the women are out working and they've got their free daycare, who is doing the housework?

GOLDOVSKAYA: You see the daycare for kids, it was free. My son went to daycare. But it was not enough, because you had to take care of food, cleaning. So those who had good conditions of life, for example, my parents, we had a separate big apartment—We could have a maid. For my mother it was easier to take a maid than to do it herself, because she had a Ph.D. degree, she was teaching, she was all the time traveling. My father was working like crazy, and men didn't do any work at home.

Men in Russia— When I got married to an American, I still cannot get used to him washing the dishes and making food, preparing food for me. And he's getting his nose in every frying pan. I cannot stand it, because it was not the way we were used

to. Men, it's not their thing. So my father never did anything, but he wrote ninety-two books.

So we had these conditions. The maid lived with us, as my parents had living space, had money to pay the salary. The people who didn't have that— There were people who lived in one room sometimes, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten people.

COLLINGS: Then these women would be going out and working in factories and whatnot.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, and they didn't get enough money. What happened is that women had to take care of everything. So they came after ten hours of work, they had to stand in line and buy food. To buy food in Russia was a real problem.

COLLINGS: A job, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I'll tell you a joke later. So when I went for a trip, for an assignment, and I knew I would be absent, away for ten days or two weeks or a week, my husband wouldn't do anything. My mother was not quite well in the end, you know, so it was difficult. We didn't have a live-in maid, we had only a come-in maid.

So what I did, I had a car, and I spent a day going around many stores. I knew already where I can get— And what. I bought a huge refrigerator, the most expensive refrigerator at the time. I remember I got the money for a film and I put all this money into this huge refrigerator, and it was all full of food, and I knew that until I come back they are safe. But usually women had to stand in line even to buy bread. It was a nightmare to make this stuff. Women worked from morning to night and Saturdays and Sundays. And that's why the family life in your sense, in the sense of every

American family, here that you can go for a weekend somewhere, go out for dinner. It was not in the habit to go to a restaurant. There were very few, it was very expensive, people couldn't afford it. We could afford it from time to time, but my father hated to go to restaurants. I think it was also this feeling of safety. You wanted to hide at home from all that.

COLLINGS: Yes, you didn't want to run into somebody who might—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. So that was the situation. Did I describe it?

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And what came out of it, men, I think— As a result, women became much more viable and vital. Is it the right word?

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They were much more energetic. This was the lifestyle that made them much more—

COLLINGS: They had to go out and interface with the world just to gather the basic foodstuffs.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. They were the active element of the society. We were the active people, because all the men kind of became like that.

COLLINGS: You know, as you're describing it, actually going out and finding the food, it almost sounds like one of the only entrepreneurial activities available.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, here, my husband, when I saw he had a hole on the sock, I took it and I started sewing. He said, "What are you doing?" And he threw the sock out. You could never do that. There was a special profession. When your silk

stockings had a line, it was a special thing to pull it and to repair it, because it was so expensive and you couldn't afford it [and you couldn't buy it in the store. The stores were empty.]. So women could do anything.

COLLINGS: So this was one of the only areas not regulated by the government. Nobody's going to inform on you on how you darn a sock.

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. No.

COLLINGS: So this is almost like a free area of creativity and activity.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I don't think that people took it this way. They hated it, because it was impossible to buy anything. I'll tell you an example. I had an assistant [Sasha Khataevitch], he went to some very faraway place and I told him, "Sasha [Khataevitch], can you, if you find—." In these faraway places sometimes there were things that people didn't buy [who lived there, didn't need, and didn't buy them], but they were very rare. "If you see a pair of good for me, please, buy them, I need them badly." He brought me a pair of, I don't know, French or English shoes. I don't know where he got them. I don't know.

So before I put them on, and I was pretty wealthy, I earned a lot of money comparing to other people, because I was a director, I was a cinematographer, I was making my newsreels, I had another job in— It will be a different story, because it's also very interesting.

COLLINGS: You were certainly busy, huh? Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I was teaching at the university, Moscow University. So I had pretty good salary comparing to other people. I could buy, but there was nothing in the stores.

COLLINGS: There was nothing to buy.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Nothing to buy. And I had no time to go look for things, just no time. I had no time at all. So I said, "Sasha, can you—?" He brought me these boots and, I put the shoes— You will never believe. I put them on the—

COLLINGS: Windowsill.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —window, and every morning when I woke up I looked at them. "Oh, I will wear them. They will be so beautiful." At first I was looking at them for a couple of months. It was summer. Then, in autumn, I put them on once a week when I went to some big event. That is the way we were used to living. So what do I want to say? We didn't take it as entrepreneurship. We hated it. To sew, I never could sew properly. I hated it.

COLLINGS: No, I was just commenting when you were saying that the women became the more vital—

GOLDOVSKAYA: They became more vital because this was the attitude towards women, that "You are equal, you can do [anything you want."] In America, in the west, if a man wants to work in five places, in five jobs, he will do it if he can manage it. In U.S.S.R. [Union of Soviet Socialist Republics], you could work only one job, and in order to get another job you had to get a special permission from the minister, and only for certain professions. I was a cinematographer, right, and a director, so for

me I could—teach. Teachers were needed— Especially those who had experience, practical experience. That's why I got the permission from the minister of television. And my dean of the department [Yasen Nickolevitch Lasursky] especially wrote a letter [for me and went to the minister with these letters] and went with this letter, saying, "Please allow her to teach. I need her," and every year it had to renewed.

A man, an ordinary factory worker, for example, couldn't get another job. Where could he get it? Men felt humiliated because they earned, very often, less than their wives did. They couldn't make more money. They had no interests because they couldn't—

COLLINGS: Do housework.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —do housework. They didn't want to do housework. So they came home and what did they do? They read the newspaper.

COLLINGS: *Pravda* and the other one.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. And watched stupid, silly, ideologically loaded charged television. Sometimes, from time to time they went to see a film. [We felt that men were helpless.] Don't know what it is, atrophy ?

COLLINGS: Atrophy.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Atrophy, when the muscles— You don't use the muscles, they don't work. That's what happened to the men, to their brain. Many became alcoholics. Many were drinking, getting together, chatting somewhere in the garden, because women didn't like them—Drink at home, so they pushed them to leave the

house, threw them out. Many families started to fall apart, everything was degrading. That was [what Soviet] life looked like.

COLLINGS: Okay. Let me—

[End of June 1, 2004 interview]

TAPE NUMBER: III, SIDE ONE

AUGUST 16, 2004

COLLINGS: This is Jane Collings interviewing Marina Goldovskaya in her office at UCLA on August 16th, 2004.

Good morning, Marina, again.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Good morning.

COLLINGS: Let's see. We talked a little bit about your upbringing and early schooling, and I thought we could just take just a very short amount of time to follow up a little bit on that. You had talked about your political upbringing, your political education. Just briefly, what exposure to the visual arts and literature— Was there any particular book or film, as a young person, that made an impression on you? I'm sort of thinking about what might have pointed you towards documentary rather than fiction. Perhaps you read *Zola*. I don't know; I'm just wondering.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, it's very difficult to say what film, for example, [inaudible].

COLLINGS: Yes, because you were so inundated with—

GOLDOVSKAYA: I can tell the answer immediately, the question, because I know which film produced a huge impression on me as a documentarian in the future, but when I watched it, I was just a student of the film school and I didn't really know what I would be doing with my life, because I entered the film school and it was a

Department of Cinematography. So I was preparing myself to becoming a cinematographer, and I never thought even that I would become a director.

So this film, which I will be talking about, was kind of a revelation for me and it made a very strong impact, which I realized much later. It's a film by Robert Flaherty, *Man of Aran*. We were shown this film on the first year. I hadn't seen *Nanook* [*of the North*] at the time. I don't think we had a copy of *Nanook*. But our school had a great film archive, so I was exposed to the best pictures, the best movies, and we were all exposed to them. Actually, most of my time in the film school I spent sitting in the screening rooms just wandering from one to another. There were six.

COLLINGS: Oh, my gosh.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. And sometimes I spent the whole day in the screening room and I was watching and watching and watching, and at the time I didn't understand it; I was absorbing it. I was just curious to see them, and I was such a fan of film. Later I understood that this was the invaluable experience. I will talk about it a little bit later. I'm just jumping. Is it okay?

COLLINGS: That's okay, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: When I was a student of my last year, it was the fourth year, we had a very flexible program. The first three years were very intense and it was lectures every day, and I had to be at school every day. Sometimes I showed up at lecture. Sometimes— It all depended on this professor. Some professors could tolerate students not coming to lectures. Some professors were very strict. So you had to figure out how to navigate in this world of our film school. But I always took the most

I could from screenings. Also I had a big kind of— A big kind of benefit comparing to other students.

[tape recorder off]

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, so the last year of my school, I just want to tell you how much films, what kind of a role they played in my life. I had this benefit that I knew languages. I knew English then, and I knew very well French then. Later I lost French because I didn't have practice enough. Even now when I go to France, the third, fourth day is already when I start talking and then I'm not shy anymore. But I knew these two languages and I loved to translate films.

In the film school we had lots of copies, you know, trophy copies from the war, probably, you know. Our specialists went to Germany and brought to the USSR copies of the best films from German archives. So we had lots of good films, lots, fiction films mostly. I was translating them, and I loved this job, everything that was connected with movies. I remember how I was translating [Ingrid] Bergman's [*Wild Strawberries*].

COLLINGS: I know. It's slipped my mind, too.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, you know what it is. From Swedish.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I heard the translation from Swedish made by a professional translator, and I remembered every single sentence.

Anyway, the last year of my school when we had a very flexible schedule, I spent half of my week going to school and the other half I was working for the film

archive, main film archive outside of Moscow *Gosfilmofond* [Central Film Archive]. It took me two hours one way and two hours back. I was working the whole year there watching films and translating them for the film scholars who were coming from Moscow. Thanks to that, I saw lots of films in this film archive.

As to the documentaries, this film by Flaherty, *Man of Aron*, it stays still in me so strongly. I think it influenced me, because it somehow clicked with my own perception of the world, this kind of struggling until the end, in spite of all odds— This film is about obsession. Obsession. And obsession became actually the main topic of most of my films during the years of the totalitarian regime because it was something that gave an opportunity of creating a conflict.

COLLINGS: So would *A Taste of Freedom* be one of those films?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Oh yes.

COLLINGS: The obsession of Sasha?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. You couldn't see them—

COLLINGS: Because there's so many.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They are in Russian, most of them. The first film I made was about the circus [aerial] gymnast—

COLLINGS: Aerial?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Aerial. She was sixty when I was shooting her, and she never used the safety belt. She didn't want to spoil the impression. She was a very interesting woman, and I chose her as my first character for my first documentary that I made as a director and a cinematographer. When she was sixty-four, she died.

COLLINGS: She fell?

GOLDOVSKAYA: She [fell in] a bow. She had a heart attack after she finished her performance. So this was kind of my main topic, obsession.

COLLINGS: So in a talk that you gave, you had pointed to her as being a role model for you.

GOLDOVSKAYA: With this actress?

COLLINGS: Yes. Then when we were interviewing last time, you pointed to two women cinematographers as role models.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. Well, she was not quite a role model. I just found the character, who interested me so much, that I wanted to make a film about her. It was my first film as a director and a cinematographer. I was not trained as a director; I was trained as a cinematographer. But then in documentary this kind of combination to be a cinematographer and a director, is very organic.

COLLINGS: Yes, it is.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So I just felt that this is a topic where I can express myself. I knew what I want to say.

I made this first film, and then if I look back at my films they were all, to a certain extent, kind of using this topic or kind of gearing towards this topic of obsession, of the human obsession, because I never made political films. So my main goal was to make human films, and these human films had to be about something conflicting, and when you film a person is obsessive, always a conflict exists between

him and the world, because he's like a tank going through obstacles in search of something.

COLLINGS: Yes. Well, let me ask you something, because I was interested in this idea that you had always made films about human topics. I know that here in the news business, women are often put into precisely the stories that deal with human interest rather than quote, unquote, "hard news." But you're saying that you preferred those kinds of— You wouldn't have wanted to do the political stories, is that right?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes.

COLLINGS: Do you feel that as a female in that system that it made more sense to everybody that you would be doing those kinds of topics?

GOLDOVSKAYA: I don't think that it bothered anybody what kind of films I was making. On the contrary, my executives, they would be happy if I would make films, political films, and I did make a lot of political stuff, but not as a director. I was just a camera operator, cameraman, camerawoman. I was pushing the button and doing it as professionally as I could, but I couldn't avoid it because I was working for television. And I wanted to be independent, to be independent in finding my own topics for my films, because to be a director and to be a cinematographer it's two different, completely different things.

When you are a director you are responsible for the whole film. It's your responsibility what topic to choose. It is your responsibility to make it the way you want it to be. When you're a cinematographer, you are used by somebody else and they tell me, "Do that and do that." That's why I was working a lot for the news. I

was shooting [Leonid] Brezhnev and the Party Congresses and all this, you know, lots of very VIP stuff, because I was considered to be a pretty good cinematographer. Then a woman, it was always— It was a very interesting situation, when a woman was not quite appreciated by the colleagues because a woman— What can you expect from a woman in this profession when you have to be—

COLLINGS: Strong.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —strong and carry this big camera?

COLLINGS: Was that a problem for you, carrying all that stuff?

GOLDOVSKAYA: At this moment, no. I don't think I would do it now anymore, because it's too heavy. But when I went to the South Pole and was alone and I was forty years old, I worked almost twenty-five hours a day. We had only two months and I had to make five films. So I was working all the time. I had no assistant and I had a huge amount of equipment.

COLLINGS: Was this a research station at the South Pole?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was our Russian station, and then there was also a German station and another Russian station, so we were flying around. It was a lot of work and we were only two women, and I had to film, to record, to take care of the equipment, to load the magazines. It was a nightmare from my today's point of view, but then it was so exciting.

COLLINGS: I imagine it would be.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was something special. [On this assignment, I was only] a cinematographer. [When you work only as a cameraperson, you have limited

responsibility. I had to think] only about making my very narrow [professional stuff such as] to make good coverage on the event. But when I was making films [as a director], I never did anything that I didn't want to do. I didn't care to film Brezhnev and Party Congress; on the contrary, it was fun and it was a way of understanding what's going on. It was disgusting most of the time, because the Party Congresses were usually very boring, the flies were dying because it was so boring. There were certain rules that you had to follow. For example, you could film only the first fifteen to twenty minutes of the event and then people [most of them were elderly] started falling asleep, so you'd have to be very quick during this twenty minutes. Then after the break, after lunch, they were also pretty animated. Then another half an hour at this time and that's it.

Then you felt, you smelled, what's going on in the country. It was very important. You were kind of exposed to very high spheres. Brezhnev shook hands with me, not at all because he knew me, but just because I was a woman. And then—[tape recorder off]

COLLINGS: Okay. Were you finished with that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, yes. You know, this attitude towards women. I said that the men were a little bit skeptical. At first in the beginning they were skeptical. "Women, what can they do?" There were very few of us in our unit. But at the same time, for a woman cameraperson, maybe a little bit easier than for men. Everybody was trying to help you, respected you, felt sorry for you, because you were carrying

this heavy camera. They thought it was heavy. So they were kind of more receptive. It was easier to get the consent to be filmed.

COLLINGS: And it was part of the party ideology that you should be respected, as well.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Sure. Sure. Sure. Definitely. So from one point of view, it was more difficult to make your way in the profession. From the other point of view, it was the other way around--- In some cases they needed to have a woman to put forward. "Here, you see, a woman, she's doing that." Television executives were closing their eyes to [me bring not political in the films I directed.] I never made political films and they were fine with it.

COLLINGS: Do you feel like because you were a woman they didn't expect you to have these kinds of highly developed political viewpoints?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. Yes, I think so. I think so. But nobody ever formulated it, in the beginning for 1980, I started making politically charged controversial films. We all felt that. The country was going into a precipice and many liberal journalists and filmmakers were very much concerned about it.

Then I felt that I came to a point when I wanted to make something really useful. This was instilled in us. These were the tricks of the ideology. The idea of serving the society and necessity of being useful and doing meaningful things was instilled in us, I cannot get rid of it even now when I'm not pressed. [Even now, I don't want to] make a film which is not meaningful. Even in Peter Sellars what attracted me most that I'm making something meaningful.

COLLINGS: Well, you were talking about how you had started making critical political films.

GOLDOVSKAYA: In 1980, I made [*The 8th* Dictator], the first film, which was controversial, and when I made it my colleagues were mad with me.

COLLINGS: Now, this was made with the studio money and so on?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, but it was not anti-Soviet. It was critical towards what was happening towards the system. I made this film with a very good and smart journalist [Damir Belov] who knew how to avoid these edgy things, [softening the conflict with this narration.]

COLLINGS: What was the subject?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was about a director of a big factory in a very small town about five hours away from Moscow, who was in permanent conflict with the ministry. The ministries were giving all the orders from Moscow. While these people in Moscow, bureaucrats, they didn't know what really was needed.

COLLINGS: So these were orders about how to run the factory, production quotas and so on?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. And [Victor Litvinenko, the director, my main character] said, "How can they know? I know better. I live here. I work with them every day. I know better what to do."

So he had this conflict with the ministry, and at the same time he had the permanent conflict with the regional Communist Party Committee, because he was also too independent in taking decisions. So it was a film about the importance of

taking decisions on your own and to give, allow more liberty and freedom. This idea was absolutely unacceptable for the Party bureaucrats.

COLLINGS: Yes, it sounds quasi capitalist, in fact.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. [Victor Litvinenko was sort of] a new Russian in today's sense of the word. But he was extremely talented, strong, young, very charismatic. The journalist with whom I worked knew him and suggested him to me. When we met, I understood that this a person whom I would like to make a film about. This was risky, but it also— In the Soviet life everything went in waves. In 1980, there was a wave when suddenly, in the Communist Party, and on the Central Committee of the Communist Party, there were people who were completely dead and old, like [Mikhail Andreyevich] Suslov, who was the political ideology chief of the whole Party. But at the same time, there was a Department of Ideology, in which there were people, communists who were dedicated, who were knowledgeable, who were more or less liberal, as much as they could be liberal working in this organization, but they were interested in [improving the situation in the country].

[tape recorder off]

COLLINGS: Was this film released?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, it was. It was released. This was quite a story. I describe it in my book, so hopefully you'll be able to read it. It was released. It was a wave when the Party authorities, they were trying to establish the idea of bringing more liberties to the areas, to the regions, so that it's not so subordinated to the Moscow Central Committee. So the film came in time.

Even my consultant for the film was, you will not believe, the chair of the television department of the Ideological Committee of the Party. He knew my films and he was a very liberal man, strange as it may seem. When you look back, some people were quite brave at this moment. He was liberal, but of course he knew [that you can allow and do only so much, and no more.] So I chose him to be our consultant. He supported our film because he liked human topics. [He was a writer, he wrote children's books.] He liked my films, and many times he sent regards to me through the director of our studio. He helped the film to be released. Even more, he suggested to show this film at the Party Conference in the Kremlin.

Of course, when my director [Boris Mikhailovich Khessin], learned that the film would be shown at this big meeting, he got scared. He didn't know the film would be received. He decided, "No, it's not what I want to do. It's better to keep the film low-key."

COLLINGS: Were you afraid?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, I was not, because I had the consultant who supported me. When you're making a film you are afraid that you will not make the film well enough, but you don't think about the consequences. So I was doing my best. When the film was ready, I showed it, and my director, using my colleagues, our "terrarium of friends," used them to kill the film. They were all saying that the film is not ready, that it's an interesting film, it will be a big thing, but it has to be polished and it's not finished yet. So I have to polish it. So the film didn't go out into this conference.

Our director, who was afraid of showing the film, he was a very smart man, I must say. He was not brave, but he was smart. After the film was shown on the first channel, the central channel, at eight o'clock in the evening, primetime, and it got a review, a very good review in the *Pravda* newspaper, our main newspaper, a big scandal broke out.

COLLINGS: Oh, really?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Many people started coming up with criticism. Then the minister of the automobile industry came to see the film personally, and he said that it is horrible that we made a film about this director, that "The director is a very weak man and he's taking on decisions. Why didn't you come to me? I would tell you who to film."

[The chief of our documentary studio, Valentino Nicholaevina Murazova] said, ["Our studio produces documentaries, not] commercial advertising."

So it was a subject of a big clash. And, you know, actually it was not pleasant to be under fire. In the *Pravda* newspaper there was a big polemic about the film, but it gave me this feeling of being on the edge, and it was so addictive that since then. My interests shifted towards making politically charged films. Not all the time, but when I had such an opportunity.

COLLINGS: Did anybody's career suffer as a result of this film?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. Oh yes, my main character's career suffered. He knew what he as doing. He knew. It's not that I made the film and made him suffer; he knew what he was doing. He was very critical. He was fired. Then he ended up in a

hospital. He specially went to the hospital. It was easy at the time to take a sick leave in order to get out of trouble.

COLLINGS: Just get away from the—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Get away. And I did it a couple of times when I was under fire. Later, he returned to the industry [and again ran a big factory.] I don't know where he is now. I have lost track of him.

COLLINGS: And this was an automobile plant?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Automobile plant, yes. And he was a great guy, a great guy. So it was my first experience with political topics.

COLLINGS: What happened afterward in terms of your career? Presumably you had other chances to make films after that.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. The studio, actually, the studio didn't pay attention to the polemics in the newspaper. After this film, I made something completely apolitical. Completely. Oh, I know what I made. I went to another studio in the same building, to make a film about Pushchin. It was the best way to get away from all this. Pushchin was our everything, so we made this film which was very good, one of my favorite ones.

COLLINGS: Which was the film for which you won a prize for the verite style? Your second film, I believe?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. It was a portrait of a surgeon, [Alexander Alexandrovich] Vishnevsky. I was only a cinematographer then.

COLLINGS: Okay. And when you say "verite," do you mean in the style of some of the, like Soviet documentary, you mean like the New Wave type?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. I didn't know about this style too much. Actually, I knew very little, but the new equipment which our studio received, it pushed me in this direction. [The first time I used "verite" style in 1968 while shooting *The Weavers*.]

My friend, [Nikita Khylov, a director] with whom I went to the film school, asked me whether I wanted to make a film with him as a cinematographer. [Of course, I said "yes."] We went to a little factory and I lived in dorm. The sound person was also a woman. So we made this film about the weavers. It was a film about the migration of people. Why do people leave their villages and go to little towns, start working in the factories, and then leave these little towns—

COLLINGS: This is a fascinating topic.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —and look for something better. So we just decided to make a film about the life of these girls. It was an extremely interesting experience, [in all respects. It was a very interesting and untouched slice of life, and a new shooting style for me.]

COLLINGS: You mean among other filmmakers in the studios there, or with you?

GOLDOVSKAYA: With me. It was not a style that was popular at that moment. I used a 16 mm camera. I lived in the dorm. I was shooting often with a hidden camera.

COLLINGS: Oh, my goodness.

GOLDOVSKAYA: At this moment of time, people didn't know what cameras can do. So I lived in one room with three girls from the factory; they were our three

characters. I was then already teaching at the university. Two months before we started shooting, I sent [one of my best students to] the factory and she found for us thirteen characters from whom we chose seven young girls, three of whom lived in the same room that I did. They put me in the same room and I was shooting their life, their conversations, all this stuff. They didn't quite understand what I'm doing. [Neither did I. But it] was so interesting, these characters were so fascinating.

COLLINGS: Do you have a copy of this on video?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, I do. I have actually only thirty minutes, or twenty-five minutes were saved because the film was banned.

COLLINGS: It was banned? Why was that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was banned. We started to shoot in summer of 1968. The situation was still okay.

COLLINGS: This was before the Prague Spring?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. How well you know history. It was during the Prague Spring. On the thirtieth of September, as you remember, the Soviet troops walked into Czechoslovakia, and the whole liberty moment was over. And it reflected in our life, in the Soviet life, because everything was banned. It was such a dark period, a dark wave in our history.

We started to make this film in May 1968 when it was still possible to do something, and we were editing the film, my director was editing it when nothing was possible. The film was about the hopelessness of life in this little factory and about this gray, gray, hopeless world of these people, these beautiful girls who had lots of

aspirations and nothing was possible because the country was degrading. It was not said directly actually, nothing was said, there was not a word of narration, but you could feel the mood, it was coming from every little pixel of the image. So the film was pretty hopeless. The girls were beautiful, but their life was gray.

COLLINGS: So it should have been about how they left their rural setting and came and were able to improve themselves by working in factories.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly.

COLLINGS: Or how they stayed in their rural setting and were able to produce agriculturally and be very healthy and strong.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, it should be. From the point of view of the government, collective farms, *nolkhos*, it was something very, very needed, and people had to be happy, were to be happy living there. But people were not happy, they were running away, because agriculture was always in terrible situation and life in the villages was horrible, so they were—

COLLINGS: Were they starving there?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, some of them, yes. Life was completely hopeless, there were no roads, no cinemas, nowhere to go, people were drinking, the villages were completely falling apart. Men drank a lot. I cannot say that it was everywhere, but in most places in Russia. In Byelorussia it was a little bit better. In Ukraine it was better. In Kazakhstan it was better. All these republics were parts of the Soviet Union. But in Russia, especially in the middle of Russia, it was really bad.

COLLINGS: Why was that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Why? Because the socialist system didn't work. Nobody didn't want it to work.

COLLINGS: Yes, but I'm just wondering why in different certain pockets you're suggesting it was worse.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Because it all depends on who is your leader. The chairman of the collective farm, if he's a good owner and a good master and— How to say? He's good in— How do you say that?

COLLINGS: Management?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Managing. If he's a good manager, then everything works, because he starts figuring out [by himself what to do and does not listen to the orders from the Kremlin.] Like my director of the factory; he was a good manager and everything worked. It was one of the best factories. He made from zero to a very high level. But how? Just a little example. People had nothing to eat in this town. There was nothing. You could buy only bread and some cans with fish, terrible fish. So what did my director do, my character? Every Saturday and Sunday he sent buses to Moscow, and people were provided with this opportunity to go to Moscow and buy food for the rest of the week. And they made shifts. For example, one person was representing ten families and he brought food for ten.

So what I want to say is, there was even a joke. A long green snake coming from Moscow to Svanovo and smelling sausage. What is it?

COLLINGS: The buses.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Very close. A train. Because they were coming from Moscow. Moscow was a place where you could buy something. So that's how it was. I'm bringing you an example—

COLLINGS: That's a good example because it gives context.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. That was real life. So these girls ran away from their horrible existence to find a better place, and this better place was not much better because there was the same problem there. They were happy for the first maybe half a year or three months and then they started thinking how to run away from this life. So we didn't speak about it directly, but that happened. The film was screaming about this.

COLLINGS: Yes, and so it was banned then?

GOLDOVSKAYA: So it was banned. And the director of the film was fired.

COLLINGS: Oh, he was.

GOLDOVSKAYA: He was fired and I was not fired, I was just reprimanded. But the material was so great, it was probably the best thing I ever shot in my life. It was made in this verite style, which was used by Americans.

COLLINGS: Maysles brothers [Albert and David].

GOLDOVSKAYA: Brothers Maysles and by [Richard] Leacock. And I have never seen their films before I came to the U.S. I just repeated this style in my own way. But it was so addictive, because I felt the smell of real life, which I could film. And it was a completely new experience for my studio, and all filmmakers were admiring this footage. The film couldn't get a release and it was burned, the copy was burned,

because the executives were afraid that this kind of footage would be seen by their chiefs. [However, Nikita Krubov and I], we took the copy to the lab. You will never believe which lab. KGB lab. It was the only place in Moscow—

COLLINGS: That was open?

GOLDOVSKAYA: —which had this facility of making a dub from 16 mm. So we made a dub. We paid for the work, of course, and we got a copy of this film.

COLLINGS: Wonderful.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Then it disappeared. Half of it disappeared. I still don't understand how it disappeared. But half of the film survived and I have it.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's wonderful.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So at least a trace of this film is left. Everybody, of course, said, "The film is no good, but the cinematographer's work is amazing." And that's how I was invited to make another film.

COLLINGS: I see. So, just on technical merit.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, technical merit. The cinematographer is not responsible for anything. That's the beauty of being a cinematographer!

Then I was even approached by my executives to recut the film, because the director refused to do it. I said, "No, I cannot do it. I'm not a director. I cannot do it." It wouldn't be a decent thing to do it and I didn't want to. So the film was banned. Nikita was fired.

I got another film to make about surgeon Vishnevsky, who was a very important figure. He was a general in the Soviet Army. He was the chairman of the

big clinic of the Soviet Army. He was the most fantastic character I ever met. When I made the film about him, he was so interesting. I filmed it again using this observation method. I called it observational method, which was "verite" style, fly-on-the-wall style. And the film got the first prize for camerawork. And, after getting this first prize for the camerawork with this reputation of a new star, camera star, you know, I got this [opportunity to direct my first] documentary about the circus actress. This is how I became a cinematographer and a director.

Also what pushed me to become a director was that I tried several times to get a cinematographer's job on a documentary film, to be invited by some of my colleagues, directors, good directors, to make a film for them. A friend of mine, with whom we went to the film school, he said, "I don't work with women. You women are good in the kitchen, but it's not your business. I prefer to work with men." You know, it insulted me so much. Of course, it was a joke, and we remained friends, but it was very insulting. So I said to myself, "I am not going to bow and to ask for work if he doesn't want me. I'll do it myself." And I got all these prizes at this moment, so it was a good time for me to start working by myself.

I went to our executives and said that I would like to make a film about a circus actress, and it was 1970. I probably seemed to be a good candidate for making a film of my own. So they said, "Okay, do it," and I got my first film.

COLLINGS: Now, these films tended to be shown on television, is that right?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes.

COLLINGS: So these units were responsible for creating the content for television?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. What I did, but it's, of course, completely my thing, I always transferred all my films to 35 mm, because there was no other way to show the films and I felt so sorry because all my films were shown only once or twice.

COLLINGS: On TV?

GOLDOVSKAYA: On TV, because they were not political. They were not kind of— Could not be used for propaganda. And I wanted them to be shown, so I transferred them just on my own— It was not easy at the time, because you had to bribe everybody. You could do nothing officially. It was all—

COLLINGS: Backdoor?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Backdoor, yes. It was so horrible, because I always was afraid that they would know about it and I'll have problems, but still I felt very strong that the films have to shown.

COLLINGS: So you'd transfer them to 35 mm.

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COLLINGS: So you would transfer them and you would have screenings of the film, is that right?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, yes. And my films started to be shown in different audiences. I was showing them, at first to my students at the university. I was already teaching. From '66 I was teaching film. Then I had screenings everywhere, big clubs, Filmmaker Club. We had many of them. Young Artists, Young Architects, Young Painters, such places. Then I was invited to different towns with this film. So I got known through showing the film like that. Also I could show them to journalists, to my friends, to anybody I wanted to show. At this time, VHS was not yet a format; it didn't even begin yet.

COLLINGS: No, it hadn't begun yet.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So this was kind of the way of the venue.

COLLINGS: So were these sort of like underground kind of screenings?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, they were not underground. They were not, no. But just they could invite me because I had films, because the films that we made for television [could not be projected anywhere on TV, the image and sound were on two separate bins. At this time,] they didn't make a soundtrack on the film. We didn't have the technology yet. So it was very frustrating to make a film which could be shown only once or twice.

COLLINGS: Yes. And I think I got confused for second. These were more the human interest films? You didn't have any political problems with these films?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. No, I didn't have any problems. Actually, I never made a film which had a political problem—

COLLINGS: Except for the—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Except in 1980, and it was kind of supported by one part of the political elite and the other part of the political elite, which was already— I always was in the middle of a struggle, because if I would make a film on my own without any support, it would definitely be immediately banned. So I always was, when I was making films, raising political issues, beginning from 1980, it was always with some support of very strong people who were on one side of the barricades.

COLLINGS: So it sounds like, as well as being an accomplished filmmaker, you were an accomplished leader of these political currents, because you were lining up the personnel for making the film.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. I had to. You had to be able to navigate in this system, because if not, you would just immediately be burned in the system, like my director of *The Weavers* who was very straightforward. I would never do such a thing after— Everything is a learning experience. I knew from *The Weavers* film that if I would be so straightforward, I would never achieve anything. You had to all the time find ways. Even when I made this film about the circus actress, the manager, the executive of our studio, didn't want to accept it.

COLLINGS: Why was that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Because there was nothing political in this film. In fact, it was too human. The actress was sad; her story was sad. Three times in her life she fell from the trapeze, she broke everything, every time she had to stay in bed for three, four years before she could go back to work. She had a very unfortunate, unhappy personal life. She was not married. She was a very troubled person, very hysterical. It brought the film—

COLLINGS: Degenerate, perhaps.

GOLDOVSKAYA: She was extravagant. She was a hurricane. Very interesting person. I can show you little excerpts from the film. She was a real character, but not so straightforward, and that's why ambivalent. There was a troubled side in her. And of course this was not a glamorous Soviet picture of life.

COLLINGS: Yes, this is a tremendous burden for a political system to try to claim that the human condition is going to be a happy one, because I think that goes beyond the call of what a political system can really do.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. And they wanted all the characters to be role models. It was like role models, all the films that were made, role models, and I never had interest in such people. Once I made a film about a role model, when I had nothing else but that one. I had to do this film. And it was the most difficult experience in my life, I can tell you. It's very funny, because it's very representative of the system. I describe it all in my book, because it's so telling.

But my character, the actress, was not a Soviet happy character at all. And that's why the film was such a good one. It was a good film. It was shown later as a

big achievement of Soviet television. And my colleagues, at this moment of time, they were not jealous of me [yet.] It was my first film. They supported me a lot and it was supported by the people in the studio. But the manager of *Ehran* [Boris Mikhailovich Khessin], my documentary unit, my little unit, was a part of the *Ehran* studio was, a very decent human being, very nice person [but not brave enough to take responsibility for this film.] He knew that he was an experienced executive, that this film that I made will never be shown on television. He said, "Cut this, cut this, cut this, cut this."

When he told me what to cut I said, "No, I'm not cutting."

He said, "Then I'm not accepting your film."

I said, "Okay."

And I had a sleepless night, came to work and wrote a letter of resignation, "I am leaving." It was terrible— I was young and I couldn't accept it, and I thought, "To hell with all that. I will be teaching. I don't want it anymore."

And, you know, he was taken aback, and he called me. Everybody was terrified that I did it, because I was already pretty well established and respected. I was pretty well known, taught at Moscow University. Anyways, Khessin called me and he said, "Why did you do that?"

I said, "Because I don't want to cut the film."

Very funnily, he said, "Before you do something, you have to count until fifteen, one, two, three, four, and only then do something. Did you count?"

I said, "No."

He said, "And I did, I counted, and I apologize. If you don't want to do it, go ahead."

I said, "Well, I counted, too. I apologize, too."

He said, "You can leave this film as it is, but I can tell you it will be shown not more than once. It will never be shown again." He was right. It was shown once, never again.

So it was this game that we always played. All my films were like that. They were human, they were about human normal people, about this, and they were never a banner of— But maybe because of this, the films are still showable. They are still shown because they created these portraits of people.

For example, I made the film about a very famous actor and a writer [Arkady Raikin], a stand-up comedian, the best one in the Soviet Union, and it's still shown on TV. I made a film about Pushchin and Pushchin's friend. I made a film about the surgeon, about the circus actress, about children, about a three-year-old boy, about an engineer, about a worker. All these films, they still can be shown and I'm not ashamed, because they are just showing the person in conflict with himself, not with the system, with himself. And you can read out the time, the political climate.

[End of August 16, 2005 interview]

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

DECEMBER 15, 2004

COLLINGS: This is Jane Collings interviewing Marina Goldovskaya in her office at UCLA on December 15th, 2004.

Good morning, Marina.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Good morning.

COLLINGS: So we've sort of touched on the Stalin era, in a sense, through your father. We talked about your burgeoning political consciousness, particularly with regard to your response to the invasion of Czechoslovakia and your ambivalent attitude about the Communist Party. We talked about your efforts to make films sort of within the system, and you discussed in your last interview the interview with the automobile factory manager. We didn't talk about this, but you also made *A Real Peasant from*— And how do you pronounce that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Archkangelsk. Archkangelsk.

COLLINGS: And that was 1986. Would that have been sort of in the same vein as the film about the—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Factory worker.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, it was in the same vein, but it was much stronger. It was a film— When I was shooting this film, you know, I felt such fear for what I'm doing. Actually, I'll tell you this story. It was a film about a Russian so called "kulak." Of

course, he was not a kulak, because there were no kulaks at the time, but he was an entrepreneur. Probably he came from a family of a kulak [which really means a rich peasant] who was exiled. We never discussed it with him. Actually, I tried not even to pronounce this name and not to make any connections between him and kulaks, because that would kill the film from the beginning. But he was definitely one of the free entrepreneurs, free-thinkers.

But I would never make this film if not my collaboration with a very close friend of mine, a journalist, Anatoli Streliany. I felt at this moment, in the beginning of eighties and mid-eighties, that I need to make films which would [stir people's minds, make them think about the reasons for stagnation in our society. I felt that the films I used to make were not working. I would like them to work.]

So I felt that I had to take a stand, because you had to do something to change the situation. It was a time for doing something. But I knew that I needed strong journalists who knew the issues. [In the beginning of the 1980s, I made several films] about the director of the factory, then I made the film about agricultural problems, with a very good journalist. He was an economist, [Gennady Lisichkin]. This film was also very edgy and caused a lot of problems for me because nobody wanted to show it on television and they were afraid of this film.

COLLINGS: I don't think you talked about this film in particular.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, it was a film, it was a called *The Center of Gravitation* and it was also dedicated to agricultural problems. In order to push this film through into being broadcast, we had to go to very high people in the Central Committee of the

Party. There were people there who were also progressive, liberal-thinking, but they, of course, had to take all kinds of precautions in order to push the film through. So I cannot say that there was no movement forward. There were people in all slices of the society, Central Committee of the Party including, who felt that changes were needed and if we will have no changes, the country would just fall into the precipice or explode or I don't know what. So it was kind of a mutual effort.

It was a very innocent film, from my point of view, but it touched on some hot issues, and that's why after it was screened I had lots of telephone calls. "Does it mean that our policies, political climate is changing?" People felt it. It was all between the lines. As I told you, we kind of developed this metaphoric language which we spoke to our audience and they caught it from one sentence.

So when I was thinking about making a film about this, it started completely in a different direction. I wanted to work with a well-known journalist [Anatoly Streliany], because I knew he was very knowledgeable, very edgy, and he could talk. We were friends. So I told him, "Why don't we make a film together." And we started thinking what to make it about. At first we wanted to make it based on his book about the Ukrainian— He was Ukrainian. About a Ukrainian village where his mother came from. He just finished this book and it was published. It was a very good book. It was called *At My Mother's Home*. He wrote a proposal and this proposal was accepted. The studio plans were prepared a year ahead of time, because it was a thematical plan to plan budgeting. So by the time when I had to start the film, the situation in the country changed.

COLLINGS: So what year did you start the film?

GOLDOVSKAYA: We started it in spring 1986. We came together and I said, "Listen, why do we have to make this film? This film must be made in a Ukrainian village, people will all speak Ukrainian, we'll need subtitles. If we start making this film in Russian, it will be crazy. Your villagers will feel uncomfortable speaking to you." They speak Russian, but why should they? It is a very unnatural situation.

He said, "You're absolutely right. I agree."

Then I said, "This topic is good. Your book was good a year ago, two years ago, when it was published, but now the times are changing. We felt that after Gorbachev's speech [when he was elected] and he became first secretary of the Communist Party. I said, "Let's take something more edgy."

He said, "Well, I have a great topic, but it's a dangerous one. It's about private entrepreneurship."

So we discussed it and decided to go for it. He wrote a proposal, based not on his knowledge of our future characters, but based on articles in the newspaper. The story was to unfold in six different parts of the Soviet Union.

COLLINGS: And it was done as a fiction film?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, no, it was a documentary. One story had to take place in Moldavia, where people were allowed to rent from the government pieces of land and grow tomatoes, cucumbers, apples, whatever they want, and take care of it and then sell, partly leave it for themselves, and partly sell it.

COLLINGS: They were doing that in China, as well, at that time.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So it was an experience very new for the Soviet Union, because before that, there were only collective farms, and everything went to the government of the produced goods; they didn't get any. The other story took place in the Caucasus where a family grew animals and organized a small restaurant where they made all kinds of good Georgian food. It was a private restaurant. The third place where I was to film was a small village, Ust-Vaenga, 600 kilometers from Arkhaugelsk in the far north where one peasant took sixty cows in order to grow them on his farm. And there were three more places mentioned in the proposal.

I took this new proposal, went to my executives, went to the studio, and said, "Here is the proposal. It's much more edgy. It's much more interesting. What do you think?"

[The editor in chief, Valentina Murozova,] said, "Let's go for it, but let's not even change the title."

She was a brave woman, actually. She [Murozova] was a former big boss in the Young Communist League. There were brave and energetic people like that. She knew what she was doing, she was very straightforward [but she was not an easy person.] It was difficult to deal with her, I must say. She didn't like me, I think. I didn't like her either. We didn't have [a rapport but we have respect for each other.] She knew that I am not somebody who will do whatever she wants to do. So we had this distance, but still she recognized that my films were a little bit different from others. It doesn't mean that I was the only one who made such files, but still it was

always something that was fresh. So she respected me, but she didn't like me. I knew that. The same; I also respected her, but I didn't like her.

She said, "Let's go for it, but let's not even change the title, just go, because if we start making changes, then it will take so much time and you will lose this time. Go."

So she kind of gave me green light, but it was much more scary for me, because then you take the whole responsibility. I would like her to share the responsibility with me. She didn't want to. So the whole responsibility was on my shoulders. And I knew that Streliony, my friend, the journalist, he didn't have any responsibility whatsoever, because he didn't work here on television. He worked in *Novij Miz*, a magazine, one of the best ones at that time. He was also a member of the Party, but still he didn't risk anything as he was not on staff. I was risking everything. But, you know, it was a time when I decided I have to try to make something significant.

First I went to Moldavia; it was no good. We made lots of shootings; it was no good. And I became very depressed because it didn't work out the way I wanted. It was mere information with no [visual beauty whatsoever.]

COLLINGS: Now, Moldavia was where they had the cows?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, no, Moldavia was the tomatoes. Tomatoes.

COLLINGS: So you just couldn't get any—

GOLDOVSKAYA: No interesting stuff. It was like an information program. This location was horrible. There were no trees there, there was no greenery, there were no hills. It was flat. It was just horrible.

COLLINGS: And were the people that you were working with at ease with the—

GOLDOVSKAYA: The people were not interested. It was all boring like hell. The chairman of this enterprise was very clever, nice guy, but no cinematic appeal. Nothing, you know just blank face. Looked like a Party function.

Anatoly Streliany came from Moscow for two days to help me with the interview, to conduct the interviews, because I wanted to put him in the film, and he was ruining the shoot, he was buttoned, all buttons, and he was boring and not interesting. Oy. I was devastated. We came to Moscow, I looked at this footage and I knew this is no good.

So very depressed, I started to prepare for the next trip. I met the author of the newspaper article, which became the ground for the proposal, and it was a very good guy, Sasha Berker, young economist who told me about the person. He said, "You will be in love with him, he is so great and he's smart. He has only two school grades. He graduated from second grade, but he's so smart. He's a talented man."

So I went there, with my crew, Anatoly Streliany had to come for two days to conduct the interviews. And the very first moment I saw Sivkov, I understood, "This is my character. I will not move from this place. I'll film there and I'll try to make a film only about him."

And, I sent my crew to a little, live-in hotel, it was called "The House of the Peasant." It was a little hut six kilometers away from this place, where Sivkov lived. Sivkov's house was standing in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by forest and by the huge beautiful river, Northern Dvina. When I saw this place, I thought that's the most beautiful place on earth. And he had this little house which looked like a house for birds, up, high up because of the tide. It was very close to the river, so it was on high— How do you say—

COLLINGS: Stilts.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Stilts. It looked as a very poor house. Two rooms. One was the room where the whole family slept; two children, mother and father. It was a big room. And the other one was the kitchen, where I slept. There was a little sofa there, and I asked him immediately, "Can I stay with you?" Because I knew I felt I have to be with him twenty-four hours a day. So I sent my crew to this little hotel and they came next day on a special vehicle which looked like a tank. It was huge.

COLLINGS: To go over the mud?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, the mud. It was already September. It was muddy. But it was the fall and it was so beautiful. Everything was red and yellow and lots of cranberry. Oh, and such big mushrooms. It was just, you know— I still, when I think about it, I want to cry, it was so beautiful.

Then I spent seven days there and we were talking and talking and talking and talking, and I was shooting and shooting and shooting his everyday life, you know, these miniscule things, these petty little unimportant things. We didn't know what

everyday life for a peasant looked like and how difficult it was and what it consists of.

COLLINGS: Because the life of the peasant had been sort of glorified in films.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was glorified, of course. It would be impossible to show all these little things, how they were struggling for every day of survival. He organized everything so wisely, he put the cows on a little island in the middle of the river and when he was sitting on top of the stairs of his house, it was high up, and he was using binoculars to look after his cows, whether they were okay.

COLLINGS: He put the cows out there for safety?

GOLDOVSKAYA: For safety, and there were lots of trees there and grass, so he didn't need to feed them specially. He just went every day to give them some salt, because they needed salt. This was also great when he went to see the cows, and I went, of course, with him in the boat, and he said to them, "Mischka, Mischka," he called some Mischka and some Borka. Mischka was Mikhael Gorbachev and Borka was Boris Yeltsin, and they were— At this moment these two party leaders were fighting. So he was so funny, funny and interesting and metaphoric and charming and everything.

COLLINGS: Perfect. Did the kids go to school?

GOLDOVSKAYA: One daughter, she was thirteen years old, she went to school on a boat every day. During the winter she was riding a horse to school because it was six kilometers away, in the same place where my crew lived in this little hotel. "Hotel."

COLLINGS: Right.

GOLDOVSKAYA: There was no bathroom.

COLLINGS: No running water.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Nothing. Nothing.

Anyway, and I lived with them. So five days later, when I had lots of footage, my crew was coming every day and we were shooting and shooting, I shot lots of footage, beautiful footage, and then when Streliany came, I met him in this hotel. I went for the first time to this hotel and I told him everything that I learned about my character. Livkov was very emotional. For example, he was repairing electricity. It's on high stilts and he had to climb, wearing this—

COLLINGS: Big boots.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —boots and with these— How do you call it? Catching.

COLLINGS: Laces or straps or something?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, because he had to hold himself. He was repairing, and then suddenly he was hanging down with his head repairing something, and suddenly he started telling me what idiots this collective farm managers are, and he was hanging with his head down, you know. He was amazing. He was full of irony. He was just a very wise, wise peasant, and of course I was completely blown away by this character. And when I told Streliany what we can get from him, what kind of questions he has to ask. Streliany said, "Listen. Do you understand that we are risking? Do you understand what it is?"

I said, "I do."

"So are you ready to go for it?"

I said, "It's too late to think about it. Yes, I understand. Let's go for it." And we did it.

[When we started the film, I felt uncomfortable as] I had to take the decision. Then when I was shooting, I had no time to be afraid and I was only thinking how great the material is and that we have to do the best we can. Then when I came back, I started to understand [how scary out venture had been.] I also started to receive telephone calls from the party secretary of Arkhaugelsk. He was responsible for agriculture, [Vladimir Dolgikh.] He knew that we were shooting Livkov and he suspected that Livkov told me lots of things that he wouldn't want to be made public. And Dolgikh started calling me. I remember once I was in the bathroom, in the shower, and he called me and I ran out, completely wet, and he said, "You have to show the film before you finish it to us."

I said, "Okay, I will try to do what you want, but it will not be soon."

"When will it be?"

I said, "I don't know. It's a very difficult film." So, I felt this pressure [coming from the party organization of Arkhaugelsk.]

Anyway, we made the film.

COLLINGS: And during this time, did you lose any sleep? Did you have problems with your appetite, anything like this?

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know what? Actually, I always was nervous when I was working. I cannot say that it was the most difficult experience in my life. On the

contrary, it was not, because artistically it was the easiest thing to do. This film was kind of, as you say, the song, you sing a song, it was so natural.

COLLINGS: Yes, it just came.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It came. I felt the structure of it. I usually have difficulties with finding the structure, finding the structure, because I never use a script, and before you find all the reverberations of the topics—

COLLINGS: All the elements, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: All the elements. Time passes and this takes all my energy. This film I made it— You know, I made it in two weeks and I felt that it was beautiful. I felt, I knew it. So from this point of view, no. But I knew that it is a huge responsibility, political responsibility, which I'm taking, and that's why I was expecting lots of problems with my future. And I was not mistaken.

COLLINGS: What was the impact?

GOLDOVSKAYA: I showed the film at first to Streliany and he wrote beautiful narration. I usually did not use narration; I always had very little narration in my films. I usually tried to avoid it. I wanted everything to be understood without it. But as I put Streliany into the film, it was organic for him to talk, and that's why he made all these points.

COLLINGS: Oh, very good.

GOLDOVSKAYA: In the Slavic department, because it's really a film which was a breakthrough and it moved *perestroika*, you know. It was amazing how it just speeded up things.

COLLINGS: Very interesting.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It speeded up. And I again felt how much you can do if you are in the right time and the right place.

So Streliany wrote a fantastic narration, a beautiful narration. And then I made everything. I finished the film. It was a very difficult experience from the point of view of technology, because it was the first time that I combined film and video technology. Before that, I made one film on video, but this time I combined two technologies.

I showed it when it was completely ready, when I was sure that it is ready. And, you know, when I showed it to my artistic council, I'll talk about it later, please remind me—it was a special group of "friends" hating each other. I cannot say that everybody hated me, because I was not a person to be hated. I was pretty easygoing and I had many friends, but there were people who were very jealous. Just let me later talk about it, because it's also—

COLLINGS: The artistic council.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Artistic council. There were maybe ten, twelve people in the artistic council who always were very critical to everything that I made. I'll tell you, and I think I told you about the film about the director.

COLLINGS: Yes, of the automobile factory.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They were very critical, the same people, and they were always critical because of different reasons. They sometimes gave very good critiques, which helped sometimes, but in most cases it was just jealousy.

In this case, when I showed the film, there was silence for five minutes, nobody even moved, everybody looked at each other, and I was, of course, waiting for something to happen. Suddenly my biggest enemy, he was not an enemy, actually, he was a normal guy, but he was jealous of me, jealous, and he had this male complex. And then he tried— You know, he had a crush on me, and of course I said no. And that's why we have certain tensions coming from this. His wife was a friend of mine. He was absolutely immoral.

Then suddenly he said, "Who filmed it? Who was the cinematographer?"

I said, "Didn't you read the title?"

"No," he said, "It's so well filmed. Who was the cinematographer?"

I said, "I did."

"You?"

I said, "Yes."

"That's a beautiful work," he said.

Then, again, silence. Our executives, the manager, editor in chief Murorova said, "I think it's a brilliant film. I have no remarks, no critiques. Nothing to critique. I would accept it with pleasure."

COLLINGS: Now, is it possible that because these are film people, after all, that they appreciated this film as a film?

GOLDOVSKAYA: I think it was both. I think they appreciated it as a film because it was probably my best film at this moment, because I was kind of growing also. I had no special education, as a director. I didn't graduate from the director's department; I

was in cinematography. That's why I was learning a lot while working. So I think I learned something.

Then it was this coincidence when everything came together. Sometimes it happens, and since then it happened to me many times. I think that this film was a big breakthrough for me personally.

COLLINGS: Yes, in terms of developing a style.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, everything somehow— It's like music. It clicked. Everything clicked. Since then many times it clicked, and I know when it clicks since then. I was always very uncertain when I was making films, because I felt this complex, which my friends and colleagues were trying to support this complex to develop in me, because they always said, "Who is she? She's a cinematographer. Why is she making the film as a director?" And I was not only a director, but a writer. Then I worked without a script with this method of observation, the direct cinema method, which was not loved by most of our directors. I don't know why. It was not very welcomed in Russia.

COLLINGS: It seems like such a good way to observe the daily life of people and—

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was dangerous. It was dangerous from many points of view. Well, it's a completely different story. It's arrogance of Russian directors coming from education in the film school, because they are persuaded from first year of the school that they are artists like Eisenstein, and it sits in their mind and they are, you know, overestimating themselves. A cinematographer is always somebody who is under the director. Actually, it's all over the world Leacock once said to me.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: "Cinematography is a very good profession, a cinematographer can be also a good friend, but he is never invited for dinner." But I think in this case, the film was a strong piece, a powerful piece, it revealed all the weak points of the system.

I didn't tell you one thing. When I came from Ust-Vaenga with this material, I was very nervous. Once, I opened the newspaper. It was one of our liberal newspapers [*Literaturnaya Gazeta*], which now is becoming very yellow. I opened this newspaper and I read an article of a friend of mine who was a famous playwright, very smart man [Alexander Gelman]. He wrote a huge article, a whole page, dedicated to the problems of the Soviet system. I read it and I thought, oh, god, my character, my Livkov, a peasant from this little place, from this little, not village, one-house village, said the same things that Gelman did—

COLLINGS: Now, how often was this film shown?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was a big risk just to put it into program, and this risk was taken by the Deputy Minister of Television, Leonid Kravchenko. He said, "It's a very good film. I completely sign under everything that you said. But please take out one word. I'll have enough problems with your film but I'll show it." The word was "shit."

I said, "But it's an agricultural term, definition."

COLLINGS: He said "Never mind, cut it out."

GOLDOVSKAYA: So I put a noise of a machine over this word.

The film was shown at eight o'clock in the evening on Thursday, and the next day everybody was talking only about this film. Eight o'clock in the evening, primetime, it was exactly after the news program *Vremya*.

COLLINGS: There were like two TV stations at this time?

GOLDOVSKAYA: At this time I think there were two TV stations. It was the first broadcasting for the entire country. And of course, everybody was watching. The next day— I became famous. Everybody was talking about the film, lots of articles in the newspapers, because people were waiting for something, something like that to happen. And, you know, of course I was praised by everybody— They said that they are awarding me with this and with that and with this. I saved half of the film's budget because I made one story instead of—

COLLINGS: Three.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Six.

COLLINGS: Six. I see.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Anyway, everything was great and the film was scheduled for a second broadcast, for a second broadcast in ten days, on a Sunday. I switch on the television set and instead of that, I saw figure skating. And figure skating had always been shown when something was happening. When the Putsch happened, it was again.

COLLINGS: Figure skating?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Figure skating and Bolshoi Theater ballet.

COLLINGS: So what was happening?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Later it gave the ground; it gave the food for the journalists to joke about this Soviet habit. They were making all these references to figure skating.

Later, three years after, I got the highest national prize for this film, [the top government prize for the best documentary of the year]. But then it was banned. There was a terrible letter received by our T.V. executives. I was immediately summoned to Kravchenko, to the same person who took the responsibility to broadcast the film. He said, "Go and read the letter. It's a horrible letter. You are accused of being anti-Soviet, and that Sivkov is an enemy of the people and he tried to emigrate from the Soviet Union."

I said, "That's crazy [inaudible]."

So I went to the headquarters and read the letter, with special notes from the second person in the Communist party, Egor Ligachev. He was the Secretary responsible for Ideology, first Secretary of Ideology, in Gorbachev's Politboro. So Gorbachev was against Ligachev, and Ligachev [did not agree on many issues and were fighting with each other].

[tape recorder off]

GOLDOVSKAYA: [After the film was broadcasted the first time], it was, as I said, on Thursday. On Friday Gorbachev requested the copy. On Saturday, Ligachev watched the film. On Monday there was a special Politboro meeting discussing the film.

COLLINGS: My goodness.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And on Tuesday it was announced at our television studio that it is a fantastic success and television executives are completely happy. And suddenly—So anyway, to make a long story short, what happened is that Ligachev was against this film, against private property [as a concept], against the changes in the policy of the government, against everything. And the Secretary of the [inaudible], they wrote this letter to Ligachev. [The film made him angry and here the letter from the Arkhanglesk Regional Party Committee came with a complaint: my film showed Sivkov as a hero while he was an "anti-Soviet element."] It was said in the letter, that Sivkov wanted to emigrate to China.

COLLINGS: I thought China was supposed to be a friendly—

GOLDOVSKAYA: China. So I immediately called Sivkov. I said, "What is it? [Can you explain to me this Chinese story."]

And he started laughing. He started laughing. He said, "They are idiots. I wanted always to prove that KGB and Communist Party is one whole thing, and they always worked together. They always hated us. What could I do? I am just a peasant. I don't need their politics. I just want to live the way I want to live. They are idiots, they are bastards. But I caught them. I caught them. I'm so happy."

[He told me that in 1974], he wrote a letter to the Chinese Embassy asking for permission to move to China, where he would like to start his own agricultural business. He said to me, "I knew that it was a horrible time in China then. It was Cultural Revolution. I was not an idiot to move to China. But I wanted to get proof

that the Communist Party and KGB were connected. I wanted to know what will happen if I ask for political asylum in Chine?"

COLLINGS: If information sharing was going on.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, he said, "I wanted to know what the fate of this letter would be and now I know! I'm so happy."

COLLINGS: Let me—

TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

December 15, 2004

COLLINGS: Say that again.

GOLDOVSKAYA: "This letter was lying for twelve years waiting for this hour."

COLLINGS: He was a patient man.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, he just was interested in having some proof to his—Everybody knew the Communist Party and KGB was one whole thing, but he wanted the proof.

Anyway, there was a big commission sent to this little village. It took them three weeks to go there to analyze the situation. Then they came, and the chair of this commission, actually he was chairing the Department of Television. Department or—I don't know how it's called. Department of Television in the Central Committee of the Party. He was a writer. He was a creative person, so he was not a functionary. Such people were also there. He came, called me and said, "Come. Quickly come." I came. He said, "Everything is fine. We'll show the film again."

So what did it mean? It meant that Gorbachev's group was taking over, because, of course, my film was just such a little trifle in this struggle, but it was—

COLLINGS: It was picked up as part of the struggle. Did you get a letter from Gorbachev ever? I mean, you got a letter from his second-in-command.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, I know him, Gorbachev. We met. I didn't like him.

COLLINGS: Why is that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, because I think that he had such a great opportunity to pull the country out of this precipice and he didn't do it. He didn't do it properly. He was just not smart enough. But it's easy to say that he was not smart enough. I don't know what I would do to have such an inheritance. Now he's not loved at all.

COLLINGS: Yes. No, I could imagine that.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Because all our dreams, everything, is shattered.

COLLINGS: Now it's just gone from a powerful country to kind of a mess.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. Right. So anyway, that was the story of the film.

Let me tell me about the artistic council.

COLLINGS: Oh, yes, please.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, I was always attacked from both sides, but I don't want to say that people didn't like me, I had no friends; not at all. I was probably the most loved person in this studio environment, because I never did anything mean to people. I'm just not a mean person. Then I was so far from all this *kajir* [phonetic], struggle. I was doing my thing. I was writing my dissertation, the first, the second. Then I was writing my books. I was making my films. I was teaching in the university. I had, of course, my parents, who were all the time sick. Since I was twenty-five years old, my father had the first attack, and then he died seven years later. And then my mother was sick. It was permanent struggle with that. My son [Sergey] was growing up. So I was always under stress. That's why I didn't participate in all these games.

COLLINGS: Yes, you were too busy.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I was too busy. They actually, they were always electing me, because they knew that I will never do anything bad to anybody. They were electing. I was the chair of the Cinematographer's Council and always was a spokesperson for the cinematographers.

So it was fine, but I was between two fires, as we say. From one point of view, the camera people, cinematographers, who were extremely jealous that I, being a cinematographer, became a director and even a writer and made my films by myself. From the other side, the directors who felt, "Oh, she doesn't have a special education. She's a cinematographer. Who is she? Why is she making films as a director and even a writer?"

It was also a question of competition— Competition, mostly.

COLLINGS: Would you say you were the only person practicing observational cinema?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Actually, yes. So consistently, yes. There were people who tried it and gave up, but I never gave up, because I felt that this is the way I can express much more and there is much more truth in my film, a film which follows life than a film constructed from the script. I was pretty consistent. So I had always this struggle; I was in between two professors. Every time when I was going through showing my new film and they had to approve of it, they came up with such devastating criticism, and they were attacking me in such outrageously insulting ways that I was completely, completely pissed off. It was very unpleasant. I still cannot talk to some of these people. Actually, they were so destructive.

There was a lot of male [complexes], because most of them were males; only two women. One was great, it was a friend of mine. She passed away not long ago. The other was a bitch, a real bitch, very angry, very jealous of everything, not talented at all. All the others were men, and some of them couldn't stand it, couldn't stand it, you know, that I'm a cinematographer, a woman. I think I am ambitious. I think I am ambitious, but ambitious in what respect? I wanted to work so much. So this hurt me.

But now, to tell you the truth, now I miss even this atmosphere, this critique.

COLLINGS: Why is that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Because there is nobody to critique me. The only person whom I trust is my husband [George Herzfeld], who watches and says, "This I don't understand." "This is good." "This is not good." And this is how we know, because usually if you show it, the climate here is different.

COLLINGS: Yes. . People like to say things that are supportive.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Supportive. Supportive. They always say, "It's great. It's great." It doesn't mean that it's great, but everybody says it's great. So that is not a very good thing, and I'm trying to create in my class—

COLLINGS: I was just going to say that, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: In my class, my main thing, you know, I kind of— I think that I did. You know, I'm using the experience, the best of what I experienced in Russia. There were lots of good things which are now neglected completely, completely, and they do not exist anymore. For example, you know, the friendly criticism. In my case it was not always friendly, but it was good to hear the critics.

So I'm using this experience in my class, but I am doing it step by step. I'm getting students together. I'm coming up with some very slight criticism. But in the end of the school year, it's a family, a family of people who are completely helpful to each other, who come up with fantastic feedback. You know, in the credits they write "Thanks to Marina, John [Slattery], my teaching assistant, "and to the fantastic 403A class."

COLLINGS: Wonderful.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And this makes me so happy because they learn from each other, they teach me a lot. Because what would I know about what a kid of twenty is thinking about?

COLLINGS: So you're sort of crafting the class into what you would have liked the artistic council to really be.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. Also I created here in UCLA, I created this documentary salon series.

COLLINGS: Absolutely.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And it is also a creation that was influenced by the Union of Filmmakers, because we had this— It doesn't exist anymore. It's killed completely. But we had this beautiful Union of Filmmakers, where people were supportive of each other and they were defending the filmmakers when they were attacked by the Goskino, by the ministry of film.

COLLINGS: Well, it sounds like, in fact, this artistic council supported the film, the peasant film.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, they did. They did.

COLLINGS: So then this is a perfect example of that.

GOLDOVSKAYA: They did. Exactly. And the Union of Filmmakers, they made these creative evenings when you could meet your peers, you could talk, discuss, exchange ideas. Then the same in our symposiums where peers could come together and discuss and be involved. We were traveling all over the country. It was all for free. It was all funded by the government. I traveled a lot. I was in the Far East and I was in the Caucasus, I was in Chechnya, in many other places.

COLLINGS: And I suppose the point of a lot of this was just to raise the general education level of the peasant population.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I didn't meet peasants. Our Union of Filmmakers had chapters in different republics, in every republic, and in big cities where the studios were concentrated. That's why all this exchange took place.

COLLINGS: Solidify the country, solidify the regions.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. And I had lots of friends whom I don't see now for years. It's very, very painful, this breakup. So that's what I'm trying to do here, and I think it works perfectly. At least I'm happy with it.

COLLINGS: I think that you've sort of brought yourself, in terms of a chronology, up to the present.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, there was another film that I didn't tell you about.

COLLINGS: Yes, I wanted to ask you if you would like to talk about some of your other films.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Actually, I do think, that if you want, we should do once more.

COLLINGS: Oh, that's fine with me.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, because—

COLLINGS: I'll turn off here.

[tape recorder off]

COLLINGS: —talk for a minute.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, *Solovky Power*, I think, I still think it's my most important film.

COLLINGS: Oh, you do?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes, I think it's my most important film. It was a film which was about the whole totalitarian system. It was a film, a metaphor, *Solovky Power*. If you hear Soviet power and Solvoky power. Solvoky, it was an island in the White Sea. When I started the film I wanted this title to be, and everybody said I'm crazy, because it was a clear implication that our seventy-five years of Soviet power was a prison camp power. It was a very strong statement. It was like a film about Soviet fascism.

COLLINGS: Did you feel you had to make this film because of your father's experience?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. Yes. It was borne out of— It's a series of little details, little things that happened to me and to my friends which suddenly came together and brought this film to being. I was shooting films for a director from another studio in our television station, Dmitri Chukovsky. He made films about writers, poets, artists,

and he always made films with me. He was a very good producer, and he felt what is needed, what is good. He worked in the Department of Literature and Theater. They made programs about literature, programs about theater. They recorded theater plays.

I got very friendly also Dmitry Sergeyvich Likhachev, who was considered to be the last Russian representative of nobility. How he survived, I don't know. He was really low-key always. He did only what he wanted to do. He was a specialist in Russian literature, in Russian folklore. He lived in Leningrad. When I got acquainted with him, he was in his late seventies. Then I made a couple of films with him about Pushkin, about lots of things.

COLLINGS: Very safe subjects.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Safe subjects, safe, only connected to literature, and I was only a cinematographer. But he was very friendly with me. [Dmitry was more of a producer, he was the one who pushed the films through.] It was much more difficult than to make a film, to push it, because he knew how to do it. He was the grandson of a very famous Russian writer, so he had lots of connections. It was very important at this time. And we are good friends with him and we were good friends.

Then another friend of mine [Victor Listov], suddenly, while working on a series about Soviet theater in the twenties, found in the archives a 1927-28 documentary *Solovky*. Being a historian, he knew what were Solovky Islands in these times; it was a prison camp. He wanted to see the footage, but the film was not accessible. It was lying in a special preservation.

was there when this film was being shot. He was then a prisoner of Solovky. [He was to Solovky camp for participating in a group of students who were interested in—]

COLLINGS: A reading circle, yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —in all the spelling.

COLLINGS: Before the type was changed and simplified.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. It was considered as a dangerous activity. Likhachev was put to prison and spent four years at Solovky. He was put to prison in '27, and in'31 he was released. When he was there, this film was being filmed, so he remembered how it was filmed, and for him it was a shakeup.

One day Dima [Chukovsky] called me and he said, "You know, Likhachev is in Moscow in a resort." He said that he just turned eighty and he wants to talk, [in order to leave his memories about his experience in Solovky camp.]

What to do? I couldn't get film to shoot. But we got one of the first VHS camcorders. We went to him and I shot the whole four hour tape. I was shooting and shaking because what he told us was absolutely shocking— We knew about the prison camps, and I read *Gulag Archipelago* by Solzhenitsyn. But, one thing is to read, the other thing to hear it from somebody who went through it. My father told me a little bit about his own experience, but he didn't talk much. He didn't want me to know.

COLLINGS: Also hadn't he signed an agreement saying that he would never speak about it?

GOLDOVSKAYA: He did. He did. But, of course, he knew that I wouldn't talk about it. But he didn't want me to have too much knowledge. He just wanted to guide me a little bit, and made me to understand where I lived. But when I heard it all from Likhachev, I was completely devastated. Ah. So I came home, told my mother. My mother said, "Do you understand what you are doing?" She was afraid.

So I put this tape into my—So I took it and put it into my wardrobe and—

COLLINGS: Locked it.

GOLDOVSKAYA: —showed it to nobody. One friend from Leningrad came, and I showed them, and they said, "It's just great material, you have to make a film."

I said, "Please, please, don't tell that to anybody."

Anyway, then later I showed it to another friend of mine who was chairing a unit at the Mosfilm Studio, his name is Sergey Soloviev. He was a very brave guy. It was 1987, beginning of 1987. It was not time yet. Nothing was said about the gulag. And Sergey said, "We have to make the film. We have to make this film and it will put a foundation for a society of political prisoners."

Actually, that was how it began. My mother was crying, and she said, "Are you crazy? What are you getting in? Remember your father. You are committing suicide."

And my son said, "Remember your father? I'll stop respecting you if you will not do it. So I will not respect you until the rest of your life," my son said.

Of course, I knew that I'm starting something very unknown. Let's finish next—

COLLINGS: Yes, let's finish next—

[End of December 15, 2004 interview]

TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

MARCH 13, 2005

COLLINGS: Good morning, Marina. Today is March 13, 2005. We've talked about your early life, we've talked about your political awakening, we've talked about the films that you made in the context of the system, and then I think the next thing that we were going to talk about were films that you made in the context of glasnost and perestroika.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I think we covered *Solovky Power*, the concentration camp film.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And the [*A Real Peasant from*] *Archkangelsk.*

COLLINGS: Exactly. Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So next I had a couple of films which I loved. One film was about the sister of Marina Tsvetaeva, Anastasia. Did I tell you?

COLLINGS: No, no.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Anastasia Tsvetaeva. Marina Tsvetaeva was a great Russian poet with a tragic destiny. She's considered to be one of the four biggest, greatest poets of the twentieth century. She emigrated in 1922 with her family, with her husband, who was a White Army officer. He had to emigrate. And they were very unhappy in immigration in Czechoslovakia. Then they moved to Paris. She lived for some time in Berlin. While they were in immigration, she continued writing poetry, magnificent poetry. But her husband couldn't find his place, of course, as all the immigrants

couldn't find their place at this time, and he got involved in KGB. They kind of dragged him into their business.

COLLINGS: When he was in Czechoslovakia?

GOLDOVSKAYA: When he was in Paris, in France already, in the thirties. He participated in several very ugly operations. So the last one was a killing of some big anti-Communist person. I think it was General [Alexander] Kutepov. So the French police started looking for him and he had to leave France very quickly, and then he left for Russia. His daughter and Marina's daughter, Ariadna Efron, was very much under the Soviet ideological spell and wanted to go back, and she went to Russia, following her father. Marina had nothing else to do but to follow them. She didn't want to go, but she had nothing else to do but to go with her little son. She came to Russia immediately. Her husband was put to prison and disappeared. He was assassinated, as many others. Her daughter also was put to prison and exiled; she never saw her again. Marina was completely devastated; no money, no place to live, no nothing. Everybody was afraid to communicate with her, you know, under the circumstances. She came back in 1939. It was a terrible time.

Anyway, when war started, Second World War, she and her son, they left with all the writers union to a little village in Chelyabinsk region, Elabuga, and she committed suicide. So it was a very tragic story.

Her sister, Anastasia, also spent in exile twenty-five years and then she came back. One more thing, just to understand who they were, they were coming from a very, very respected family. Their father, Ivan Tsvetaeva, founded and was the

architect of the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, which today is the biggest museum in Moscow. And in spite of all this, in spite of doing so much for Russia, it was all ignored. So I met Anastasia occasionally. I didn't know her. I was very interested in her and, of course, in Marina. But it was my former student, Tanya Alexandrova, who called me and said, "You know, Anastasia is in Moscow." She was living in a monastery most of the time, in Estonia for a couple of months. She was coming to Moscow, and she never allowed anybody to film her.

So I was lucky that Tanya introduced me to her, and I was filming her four times, in '90, '91, '92, and '94. Then I had also a chance of shooting, filming her together with her friends, and one of my last shots in the film, these three old women, they were altogether almost three hundred years old. And it was a film about Russian intelligentsia. It was kind of the second part of *Solovky Power*, destinies of Soviet intelligentsia under the totalitarian Stalinist period. So I made this film out of nothing. It was four different shoots made over a period of four years. But the film is one of my favorites, and I think it was an important film to preserve for history, these destinies. This was a film I made in '89. It was following *Solovky Power*.

Then I started working a lot for foreign companies. It was a time when I left television.

COLLINGS: *A Taste of Freedom* was made for a foreign company, wasn't it?

GOLDOVSKAYA: For America. For Turner Broadcasting. So it was after I showed my film here, *Solovky Power*, I was invited by Roland Joffe to make this film for Turner Broadcasting. So I started making films in Russia, but for foreign countries.

COLLINGS: Were they distributed in Russia?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, *Taste of Freedom* was not distributed.

COLLINGS: That's what I was wondering.

GOLDOVSKAYA: But it was not because Russians didn't want to. It was too explicit, because I made this film about a family of my student, and they had already then problems. I made the film about tensions in the country and in the family. So we decided not to show the film, because the main character was a very popular figure. We decided it's better not to show it.

Then all the other films were distributed. What does it mean, distributed? They were shown once, twice, three times on television, and that's it, because there was no distribution for television; only broadcasting. After *A Taste of Freedom*, I made a film for Austria. It was a two-series film, *From the Abyss*, [*Iz Bezdny*-Russian translation], is was called. The first one was dedicated to people of Leningrad, Siege of Leningrad, it was called, a ninety-minute film which was called *People and War*, Germans and Russians in the war, the inciting of both sides, the mess, and then how they got out of this mess. It was an interesting experience for me. I was working for Austria.

Then I got immediately a couple of films made by Arte, France/Germany, and Canal+, French, and it was a nonstop work. I made a film in '91, in '92, in '93, in '94. In '95 I made *This Shaking World* here in the United States. It was the third part of my diary series. It was a film after I made *Lucky to be Born in Russia* in '94. It was a film

about the Russian coup d'etat in '93. I came to the United States hoping to relax, and here the earthquake came, the second day after I came to L.A.

COLLINGS: That was the second day you were here?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes.

COLLINGS: Oh god.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I had jet lag and that's why I didn't go to bed in time. I went to bed and three minutes later, boom! And all our books fell from the shelves in the corridor. I could be killed by these books. Anyway, I wanted to make a film—everything is shaking; the world around us is shaking. So I made all these films, and my main goal was, with the exception of *This Shaking World*, because it was an attempt to understand States life here in the U.S., and also it was an attempt for me, my personal attempt, to get rid of my fear of Los Angeles, which was overwhelming for me.

COLLINGS: Really.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. After this film, I kind of got to terms with the city. *House on Arbat Street*, then two parts of my diary, *Shattered Mirror* and *Lucky to be Born in Russia*, then *Children of Ivan Kuzmich*—

COLLINGS: And *The Prince is Back* was in there.

GOLDOVSKAYA: *The Prince is Back* was later. It was 2000. So every next film and all these films were kind of made in order to explain to the West and to myself, try to understand Russian mentality and the tragic history of Russia in the twentieth century, the consequences for today's generation, and just to understand what

happened to us. Because in order to understand what happened to us there had to be an analysis, and I wanted to use my characters as the witnesses who witnessed and lived through this mess, to explain with their help and by them what happened to the country. So this was my goal.

Then I couldn't stop already. I made one film in the United States just now, which took me practically seven years to accomplish. It's a film about Peter Sellars. Have you seen it?

COLLINGS: I haven't seen it, no.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So it was a film that I made here on campus, actually, mostly, but then, of course, it went beyond campus. I made it about Peter Sellars. It very exciting to work on this film. I'll give you a letter by Bill Viola and his wife. They wrote it to me yesterday. It's such a nice letter! I just was so moved yesterday when I got it. It's a good film. I'm very happy with that film. It's completely an American film.

COLLINGS: I was going to say, how does it relate to this other work?

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, I think it's absolutely in the context of everything that I have done. It's a very anti-establishment film because Peter is the way he is. I wouldn't be able probably to make such a film on my own, because I don't feel that I have the right of making a film, a statement about the United States. I don't know the country well enough, and I am afraid that I will not be able to analyze it the way it should be analyzed. It's too difficult.

COLLINGS: And also your Russian films, the relationships you have with the people in the film is very important as well.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, I cannot say that I don't have relationships.

COLLINGS: No, but you understand what they're saying about Russia just very instinctively.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know what? This doesn't bother me at all. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I'm mistaken, but I don't feel that I have a problem in understanding Americans. Of course I don't know American history well enough, and I'm not so much in the context of American culture. But I must tell you it's much easier to understand American history and American culture than to understand Russian history and culture.

COLLINGS: Oh, I'm sure it is.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Because American like is much more normal than Russian life.

COLLINGS: And also there's less of it.

GOLDOVSKAYA: There is less of it, and it's much more normal. I just feel comfortable here and rather well adjusted.

COLLINGS: And also sometimes a new perspective is very revealing.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. But I don't feel that I can make judgments and statements about America.

COLLINGS: [Wim] Wenders did something, and the French director [Chris Marker] who did the film in Japan, *Tokya Ga*. These things are often very interesting.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, I made one film, *This Shaking World*. It was okay, but it's not my favorite film. I don't know. Maybe one day I'll do it, but I'm much more interested in Russian issues.

COLLINGS: Sure.

GOLDOVSKAYA: So even here now I'm making a film about a Russian émigré who is an American citizen a long time ago. She is working on treatment of cancer. She got a huge grant from the Cancer Society, and she has cancer herself. Now I'm making a film about her, and it will be very much connected with Russia. She lives in Salt Lake City.

What I want to say, I made Peter Sellars because I felt that his ideas are very close to mine, my perception. I think that America is a country where culture and art does not play the role it should play in a civilized country. It's much more entertainment than something else. This is very upsetting. There is no government support, practically, for artists. Artists are unhappy and they are selling their soul to the devil because they need to somehow feed themselves. So when I met Peter Sellars, he expressed this idea, and I was absolutely taken by it. I felt that I'm sharing them, these ideas, 100 percent. Then, of course, Peter himself is such a charismatic person.

COLLINGS: Oh, definitely.

GOLDOVSKAYA: That I just fell in love with him as a human being, and we are very good, very close friends now. I became close friends with him, with Bill Viola, with Gronk, all the people who were involved in this production. And, you know, actually for me this film was also an important test for my professional ability, because Peter didn't want this film to happen.

COLLINGS: Oh really.

GOLDOVSKAYA: In the beginning he did, because I started shooting his lectures and he didn't care too much. And then he started rehearsals, and I asked him whether I can shoot the rehearsals in this Latino community with nonprofessional actors. He was working on a play by Jean Genet, *The Screens*. So he was not very comfortable with that, and he told me, "Be careful, because the actors are not professionals. We have to be very careful with them."

And I said, "Don't worry. I'll be careful." I was careful with the actors, but I came too close to him, and that's why he felt very vulnerable sometimes. He's a very emotional person, and he had sometimes outbursts of weakness; I can say that. Actually, weakness is the wrong word. It's not a weakness, no. He was very emotional and he didn't feel comfortable showing how emotional he is. For example, he had to leave the next day after the premier, and I came to his home to film him the last evening before his departure. It was eleven o'clock at night. When I came, and he was very upset. I said, "Peter, what happened? Why are you so upset?" And I was shooting.

And he started crying. He was crying. "I cannot leave these people [the actors]. I cannot leave them." And he was talking about them and how he cannot leave them and why. And I was shooting. Next morning, he left. When he came back to Los Angeles, he was very cautious, he did not want me to film, and I understood why. He once told me, "It's your big money piece, that I was crying." And I decided not to use it, but I felt uncomfortable telling it to him because then I would kind of

point out that I understood his weakness. So I kept it for myself, but decided not to use it, this material.

So what happened is that he didn't want me to shoot too much. [And actually, I couldn't shoot as] he was coming and going all the time. I couldn't even finish the film. I was shooting it for six years. And then it took me another year to edit it. So the whole thing was a painful experiment, and many times I wanted to drop the project. My assistant, who was editing the film, and my former student, she didn't believe in it, and it was practically the only person whom I could share my concerns and doubts with. She said, "Don't spend your time on this project. It will never work out." She helped me very much, because without her I wouldn't do it, but moral support was needed. The only person who helped me with his moral support was my husband, as usual. He's very supportive. But, you know, I just felt that I got two grants from the UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] Academic Senate, and it was just my feeling of responsibility to fulfill my obligations. Then I felt I have to finish the film. Even if it's not going to be a good film, I have to finish it. And I finished the film and I'm so much in love with it now.

COLLINGS: Good. How long is it?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It's only fifty-eight minutes. It's fifty-seven.

COLLINGS: This method where it takes you about seven years to collect the footage, was this the first time that you had worked like that?

GOLDOVSKAYA: It was the first time, but I have a couple of more projects in the same situation, so for me it was very normal. For example, I when I was making the

film *Prince is Back*, I lived with him and his family for three months, but three months is not seven years. So I made the film, but then I continued to follow his life and I made a continuation, a follow-up on this film in 2002. So I'm used to living with a camera. And then my Russian project, which had started in '89, the diary, it's still going on. [I had been working on it for] practically eighteen, twenty years already doing it, and I have seven hundred hours of footage, very precious footage which I definitely will use in the future to make [a new diary, which will be the] history of our changes. So it's a normal situation for me.

COLLINGS: I was curious about— I really love *The House on Arbat Street*, and I was also intrigued by the idea of showing, in essence, seventy years of history from the perspective of predominantly women living in a house. I thought that this was a particularly feminine way of describing a political period, and I wondered if that was a concern of yours at the time that you were making the film.

GOLDOVSKAYA: You know, it was not. I didn't want to concentrate on women only. I didn't even think about gender. But when I filmed, I understood that my most interesting characters are women, and this scared me a little bit because it was not representative for the country. I had to show the role of men, too, somehow, their involvement. So I had a couple of them there in the film, but you are absolutely right. I'm much more successful with women than with men. And then women are more open. I have a very good rapport with them. With men actually also I have a good rapport, but women, I more feel for them. I more understand probably a woman character.

Now I'm making a film at this moment. I got this grant, and I'm making a film about a very famous Russian writer, Rybakov. He wrote *Children of Arbat*. Maybe you know this novel.

COLLINGS: No.

GOLDOVSKAYA: He's a very famous writer. His books were published in 59 countries.

COLLINGS: Does this refer to Arbat Street once again?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. He lived on Arbat Street. He wrote this book which was published only in '87. It's about totalitarianism in Russia. You know, we got acquainted in '94 and I just fell in love with him. He was eighty-four years old at that time, very strong character, very interesting, very charismatic, and very important for Russian culture. So we got very friendly, and during four and a half, five years, I was shooting conversations with him, and, you know, he explained Russia, what happened so well, that I was astonished how important this material was. Then he passed away. The last time I filmed him was five days before he passed away. [I shot 25 horus of footage and I didn't know what to do it.] Nobody needed it at the time. I didn't even try to push it and make the film as I didn't feel that it's something that was needed at the moment.

[And now I decided that the time has come to make a film about Rybakov. I felt that his thoughts and ideas will help me to make a film about today's Russia. To use Rybakov as a commentator of what's going on now.]

COLLINGS: The political situation in Russia right now?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. I am not ready. I am just a witness. I'm witnessing what is going on and trying to put as much as I can on tape.

COLLINGS: But during the perestroika era, you didn't feel that way?

GOLDOVSKAYA: I felt that the country is moving in a direction, in a direction of democracy. Now I feel the other way around. And, you know, it's very difficult to accept it and to vocalize it, voice it.

COLLINGS: So there's sort of a difference because these films like *A Taste of Freedom* and the others, you're connecting with characters and they are expressing their hopes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Exactly. And my hopes.

COLLINGS: And your hopes, and you are able to sort of convey this in this very organically formed film.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right.

COLLINGS: Whereas now you don't want to connect with what people are feeling because it's too horrifying.

GOLDOVSKAYA: It's too horrifying. People are very depressed. I am very depressed all the time. And then there is a feeling that—how to say—I don't even want these people to be exposed at this moment, because they are too open expressing their thoughts

COLLINGS: That's why I was asking you about *A Taste of Freedom*, because it just seems so bold.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, at this moment of time, right. Sasha Politkovsky, for example, he was saying these things, but today, I filmed this summer, his wife [Anya Politkovskya], they are divorced.

COLLINGS: Oh, they are?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes.

COLLINGS: They did get divorced?

GOLDOVSKAYA: They got divorced. And Anya [Politkovskya] became a very outspoken journalist covering Chechnya.

COLLINGS: She did?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes.

COLLINGS: Because there's a scene— Doesn't he go to Chechnya in the film?

GOLDOVSKAYA: He goes to Azerbaijan.

COLLINGS: Oh, he goes to Azerbaijan. Right.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And then she was a housewife. [When they separated, she started to work as a journalist.]

COLLINGS: Really?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. [And Sasha, her husband couldn't accept the new trends in journalism, when many of his former colleagues became corrupt. He started to drink and they left Television Studio. Now he works in educational videos.]

COLLINGS: Were there many programs like his show [*Vzgliad*] on at the time?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. His program was the boldest, and the street people with whom he worked, one was killed. [Vladislav] Listyev was killed, and it was a big

thing. This was connected with money. And Sasha is a very clean and decent person. He didn't want to get involved. So this dirt, he wanted to stay out of this dirt, and that was a reason for him to drink and to— You know.

COLLINGS: There's such a wonderful scene at the end of the film, where they're going to the demonstration that people had been discouraged from attending, and it's a very lovely scene.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, you know, since his life is kind of broken, and actually for a long time I didn't risk to talk to him because he knew that I'm with Anya very close, his wife, but this year we connected again, and when I come to Moscow I probably will make a story on him. But she is extremely outspoken, and what do you think when this year, in summer, the [inaudible] happened. I was there. [inaudible], you know, with terrorists.

COLLINGS: Yes.

GOLDOVSKAYA: With children. She, of course, immediately took a ticket and wanted to fly there. She was poisoned in the airplane, you understand by whom.

COLLINGS: Was she politicized at the time of the making of *A Taste of Freedom*? She seemed fairly oriented towards her—

GOLDOVSKAYA: She was completely under the spell of her husband. They had a very strong love relationship. And she was then a housewife, she had two little kids, she was completely—

COLLINGS: Yes, she was always in the home.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And later on, her relationship with Sasha started to deteriorate more and more because he was all the time traveling here and there, he ignored his family responsibilities, and she felt hurt. And then little by little she decided to get out of this pickle and started writing. She's a very talented woman, extremely strong. So, you know, they changed places. Then he felt that she's stronger than he. I think he always felt that he was stronger than she. And she became who she is now.

COLLINGS: When you made this film, it also has a very strong sort of feminist dimension because it's not just about his work in the political arena; you're always showing her at home, and there are some scenes where she is, I don't know, cutting up some vegetables and she looks really mad. I was wondering, did that theme evolve in the course of shooting the film or did you go in planning on having this kind of two-front approach to the—

GOLDOVSKAYA: I knew for sure that she's a very charismatic woman. She was my student. I always liked her. She's very charming. I cannot say she's charming. She's strong. Now she's completely— You know, she looks like an old woman now.

COLLINGS: How old is she?

GOLDOVSKAYA: She's older than I look. She is forty-four, I think.

COLLINGS: But she's been worn out by the life.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. When I started shooting *Taste of Freedom*, I knew that she would be a big part of the film, but knowing Sasha, I knew how charismatic he is, too. However, when they were together, he looked shallow close to her, because she was always a very deep, profound person, and he is more shallow.

Anyway, when I started filming, I just was following life. He was never at home. He had not much to say, you know. And she had a lot to say, she was at home, and she was thinking. She said, "Sasha has no time for thinking. He's working all the time and drinking."

COLLINGS: He was drinking at that time?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Yes. I cannot say that I planned it before; it just came by itself. I never plan anything so early, because I am following life. For example, my son, he's a fiction film person. He was a scriptwriter and he was a director and now he's a producer. He is planning things in his head. I never do that. I do plan, of course, but to a very limited extent, because I am usually following life and trying to find in life things that are interesting, revealing, and then out of that shape and mold, my film.

COLLINGS: So of this sort of perestroika cycle, you might call it, which is the cluster of films that you feel really captures the period?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, my favorite films, of course, are *A Real Man from Arkhangelsky*, *Solovky Power*, definitely it is kind of— They both are equally important, I think. Then *I am 90, My Steps are Light*, about Anastasia Tsvetaeva, and then *Taste of Freedom*, *Shattered Mirror*, *Lucky to be Born in Russia*, *House on Arbat Street*, and *Prince is Back*. These are my favorites. And all the other films that I made, I like them, but—

COLLINGS: *Lucky to be Born in Russia* and *The Prince is Back* are sort of shifting the terrain a little bit. *Lucky to be Born in Russia* is sort of the beginning of—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Turmoil.

COLLINGS: Of turmoil.

GOLDOVSKAYA: And going downhill.

COLLINGS: And *The Prince is Back*, I don't know how you feel about it, but here is this guy and he's reclaiming his aristocratic heritage, and it's wonderful that he has this sort of artistic vision, but you don't really know where that's going to lead. So I see those two as being in the same group.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Right. Absolutely, yes. Every film for me was a piece of time, a certain period of time and my feeling of this time. *Lucky to be Born*, I felt that something is very, very, very wrong, and making this film I was also trying to kind of calm myself down. I was trying to find some positive things and some humoristic things, but still things were definitely going downhill. And actually *The Prince is Back* is a very sad piece about broken and shattered dreams. From my point of view, I was conceiving it from the beginning. I felt that the country's going in a completely wrong direction, that [Boris] Yeltsin is killing it all. He destroyed what could be achieved. It was not achieved. But he destroyed even the idea. So it was the middle of the end.

COLLINGS: The middle of the end.

GOLDOVSKAYA: The middle of the end. But now I'm making *Rybakov*, which will be an attempt to analyze why things went so wrong.

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GOLDOVSKAYA: The film about Rybakov, I think will be an analysis why it was doomed, why perestroika was doomed. He explains it so well, and I have lots of footage. I have footage which will give me the opportunity to say, to show how it was going downhill, you know. I will try to— I don't know how I will do it stylistically. This is a big problem. And then I have so much footage. To go through this footage is very hard. But I will try to make it be felt, because Rybakov explained it better than anybody else. And now, twenty years of perestroika, there are articles in the newspapers, and again everything is— Such a mist over everything is hanging. People are interpreting things in a very confusing way. People are confused. Young people don't know where they come from. They don't understand their history anymore. History is being misinterpreted. It is interpreted in the interests of those who are running the country, and it is a big, big, big, dirty mess.

COLLINGS: Yes. So after you make that film, are you going to be able to make another Russia film?

GOLDOVSKAYA: Oh yes. I will be making, I hope, continuing. I don't know how it will be funded.

COLLINGS: What do you think the topic will be? Because if you're making the film which is the end of the end of perestroika, then what's the next—

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, it's not the end of the end. Maybe I'm not expressing it correctly. No. It will be the analysis of why perestroika came to such a dead end, but life doesn't stop. It will continue, hopefully, you know.

COLLINGS: I just thought you meant you were going to switch topics.

GOLDOVSKAYA: No, no, no, no, no. I don't think so. You asked me about whether I feel more comfortable with shooting Russia and Russians. I feel very comfortable shooting here. So parallel to the Russian thing, I'm shooting here. I don't know what will come out of it. For me it's not so important in what will be the outcome, but the opportunity just to follow, kind of to analyze life which I am a part of. And I'm very comfortable with Americans. I cannot say that I feel uncomfortable, I don't know what to talk to them about; it's not that at all. But my heart is there. My heart is there.

COLLINGS: Did you have any trouble switching from film to video?

GOLDOVSKAYA: No. No, on the contrary. For me video was such an organic way of working, and it solved a lot of my problems, such as the film ratio. For me video was a solution of many problems, because the main thing is to gather the footage, and I couldn't gather the footage I wanted to get because I was not free when we worked with film. And then also, of course, these little cameras. I don't care so much for the quality of the image. The image is pretty good. But the ability, the opportunity to film and to work with no interference and no need for help from the outside. I can do all the shooting and sounds recording by myself.

COLLINGS: A crew.

GOLDOVSKAYA: I don't need a sound person. I don't need anybody. I do need still an editor, and this is chaining my hands, so I'm trying to learn this animal [Final Cut Pro].

COLLINGS: I see. Because you had not learned the digital editing techniques.

GOLDOVSKAYA: Well, I know how to do it, but it takes me so much time. My relationship with computers is not as good as I would like it to be. My grandson is much better with computers than I am. But I hope, that one I will be able to edit myself.

COLLINGS: Oh, sure.

[End of March 13, 2005 interview]

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