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**The image of the enemy in American and Soviet cinema during the Cold
War
(English Abstract)**

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My doctoral thesis, *The Image of the Enemy Reflected in American and Soviet Cinema during the Cold War*, is an analysis of the enemy images reflected on the big screens of the main international actors during the Cold War: United States of America and the Soviet Union. From this point of view, this research can be considered as an element of bibliography that treats the cultural element of a war in which the ideological conflict has given rise to perpetuated visual patterns for fifty years.

As I tried to illustrate during the thesis, film productions that have projected images of the enemy during the Cold War perform a dual function: The first considers the film as a cultural product of the Cold War ideology. More than a political, economic and social confrontation, the new post-war international system was the context of an ideological confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. At the same time, the film represents the projection of public attitudes at a certain historical moment, and its ability to influence attitudes and mentalities offers to this cultural mean not only the role of a product of history but also of a producer.

Thus, the thesis takes on interdisciplinary valences, combining historical, cultural, sociological and psychological elements, in order to present the complexity of the process of building these images, and the way in which they influenced both the collective mentality and the governmental attitudes of the time. More than a cultural product that aims to represent historical events, film becomes a product of history, its interpretations highlighting the public attitudes of a certain historical timeframe.

Lenin's anti-imperialist rhetoric was successfully transformed into anti-american propaganda by Stalinist policies, in the early years of the Cold War. Using themes such as the aggressiveness of the military apparatus, the involvement of the capitalist intentions in politics, racial, ethnic and gender discrimination, media corruption, the superficiality of the American culture, the aim of the Soviet ideology was both to produce the image of a new enemy, and to legitimize its own internal and foreign policies.

Although the de-Stalinization period ignited by Khrushchev would relax (at least partially) domestic policies, while facilitating the thaw in US-Soviet relations, the image of the American enemy continued to be perpetuated both in official speeches and on the big screens. Moments such as the Berlin Wall build-up, the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis have only acted as a catalyst for anti-American propaganda, at the

heart of which would be the image of an enemy, who, using any means was trying to impose his own way of life.

If the first part of the Brezhnev period was associated with the relaxation of the détente policies, facilitated both by the visit of president Nixon to Moscow, followed by the Brezhnev's trip to Washington, the end of the 70's witnessed a new turn in anti-american rhetoric. Once cemented with the repercussions of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan, the hostile attitude toward the American enemy was to culminate with Andropov's short term in office. The international events of the 80's led him to conclude that *the imperialists are leading a arms race on an unprecedented scale, pending a war.*¹

On the other side of the *iron curtain*, the United States anti-communist rhetoric that began since the interwar period, became a constant of the post-war political status-quo. The intense media coverage of the big espionage trials, the House majority of the Republican Party, as well as the internal anti-communist policies of the McCarthy era were the main factors that led to a nationwide anti-communist campaign, comparable in its intensity and institutional implementation with the Soviet cultural policies.

The personification of the communist enemy would find its visual identity around the saboteur/wrecker character. Strongly influenced by communist ideology, it is in a continuous struggle to undermine the US economy, thus seeking the destruction of the capitalist system. The communist enemy is illustrated in turn as violent, duplicative, emotionally sterile, lacking individuality and faith in God, mysterious and ubiquitous. These attributes of the enemy have been shaped, distributed and encouraged by the attitude of both government figures and opinion leaders of the period.

From McCarthy to Nixon and from Kennedy to Reagan, all major American political figures have shaped through their speeches the image of communist enemy.

The first chapter of this doctoral thesis aims to present a theoretical perspective on the main means of interpretation and perception of *the other*, as compared to the *self image*. In an attempt to discern this mechanism, both psychology and sociology have provided distinct explanations. The paradigm put forward by psychology attributes the formation and development of a concept of "the enemy" at individual level, with the

¹ Iuri Andropov, „Concluziile Celui de-Al 26-lea Congres al Partidului Comunist”, 25 martie, 1981, National Security Archive

image of an enemy closely linked to the threatening possibilities of violence or aggression.² The psychological process behind the image of the enemy/enemy describes a mechanism in which people exaggerate the negative or threatening characteristics of such a group.

The sociological branch of the enemy image studies locates the process of materializing such images at the level of intergroup dynamics. Thus, the identity of a group is defined in relation to the identity of the *other*.

A concept closely related to the friend/enemy dichotomia is the distinction between *inner group and an outer-group*, which implies that feelings of proximity, support and help are reserved primarily for the family, then released to individuals who can be considered in one way or another as part of their own group, identified on the basis of common characteristics (labels). Thus, being the product of a particular culture, being a supporter of a particular religion, or speaking a specific language, forms a pillar for inner groups. The construction of an enemy's image involves the use of tools, methods and techniques. Discussing the importance and impact of stereotypes in shaping the enemy image, I used the definition of political commentator Walter Lippmann, who associates stereotypes with a simplified mental image of some categories of objects. These categories of stereotypes make it easier to build mental models by which people manage their activity.³ Therefore, giving homogeneous sets of characteristics to the portrayed enemy on the big screens was aimed not only at oversimplifying him, but also at facilitating a false sense of knowledge. The continuous perpetuation of such visual models (whether as independent images or narrative threads) would reinforce the illusion of knowing the enemy. Arguing that the formation of stereotypes is motivated by social, political and economic factors, Lippman explains how simplifications are perpetuated and thus take on resistance to change.

In order to determine the starting point of the mutual hostile attitude, I inserted at the end of the chapter an analysis of both the post-World War I Leninist and anti-imperialist rhetoric and the United States anti-communism attitude triggered by the Russian revolution and fueled by the trade union movements of the interwar period. Both

² Ofer Zur, „The Love of Hating: The Psychology of Enmity” *History of European Ideas*, 13 (4), pp. 345-369.

³ Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion*, ed. Harcourt, Brace & Co, 1922.

the first red scare and the anti-imperialist attitudes represented traits of the years leading up to the Second World War

For Lenin, the international nature of imperialism is positioning its enemies of the Soviet Union in the United States as well: America has become one of the most important countries when talking about of the depth of the abyss between the arrogant multimillionaires who live in luxury, and the millions of workers who live on the poverty line.⁴

On the other hand, the American anti-communism of the years after World War I has given rise to the so-called *red scare* an attitude aimed at identifying two categories of foreign enemies: The Soviet Union as a state, as well as the members of the American Communist Party, former Party members, or just sympathizers, whose aims gravitated around the annihilation of the United States of America. Both the Leninist ideology and the anti-communist movement triggered by the first red fear established the patterns after which the image of the foreign enemy will be built and distributed to the general public along the Cold War. Before discussing how the Cold War's film industries translated these attitudes on the big screens, a careful look was needed at how the main actors of World War II used the film as a key tool for gaining popular support. Chapter II therefore aims to examine how film products have assumed the role of a vehicle for anti-enemy rhetoric. This part of the study is an important pillar of the doctoral thesis for two reasons:

First of all, the chapter is meant to show the way in which both the United States and the Soviet Union have referred to the image of the german danger. The related images of the Nazi danger would be recycled and re-used by the United States film industry and the Cold War began.

The visual portrayal of the excessively violent, cowardly, anti-Catholic enemy was quickly transposed by the American film industry to the communist enemy, with the end of World War II.

Secondly, the portrait of the foreign enemy of the post-war period is an act that is even more difficult to imagine, given the conjunctural alliance of the two super-powers between 1942 and 1945. The United States film industry, which supported government

⁴ V.I.Lenin, *Letter to American Workers*, Pravda, nr. 178,

policies, was to strengthen the image of friendship between the two states, through a series of film, whose role was to illustrate that, despite ideological differences, American society resemble the Soviet society in many respects

The analysis of the main pro-Soviet films of the period (*Song of Russia*, *The North Star*, *Mission to Moscow*) aims to reveal the governmental mechanisms behind the productions, while presenting the main features attributed by Hollywood films to the Soviet friend. Using the distortion, rationalization, or total omission of historical events, the films mentioned created the image of a Soviet society, whose members (be they workers, peasants, military or even government figures) share the same virtues as their American counterparts. In order to encourage the United States film industry to raise the profile of the war film genre, the Bureau of Motion Pictures had coordinated the drafting of a instruction manual on the topics that will need to be included in the new scripts ⁵: In the third chapter of the manual, *Who are our allies?*, movie producers are advised to deepen their knowledge of the Soviet Union. *We must fight against the lies about the Soviet Union, and emphasise their greatness and heroism*. Surprisingly, the textbook informs the studios that the Americans reject communism, but do not reject *our Russian ally*.⁶

Last but not least, I have studied the way in which the nazi propaganda machine had chosen to visually portray both the American and the communist enemies. This was necessary in order to provide an overview on the complexity of visual communication at a time when all propaganda tools were made available to each main international actor. Moreover, the study of the images provided by the Nazi film industry is of main importance in the context of the post-war division of spheres of influence in Europe. The division of Germany has split the role the film was to play in the new international context.

Enemies turned into friends for a short time would regain their original role with the bipolarization of the post-war world. Chapters III and IV are trying to mirror anti-enemy attitudes in the most tense Cold War period. Both the intensity of anti-enemy

⁵ Clayton R. Koppes, Gregory D. Black, "What to Show the World : The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945", *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 64, No.1, p.89, 1977.

⁶ *Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry*, Washington D.C, Office of War Information.

rhetoric on both sides of *the iron curtain* and the level of state involvement in the domestic policies of the film industry give this part of the thesis a special importance. From a timeframe point of view, the chapters analyze the movies directed and distributed in the United States and the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1955. Prior to analyzing the symbols used in the visual portrayal of the foreign enemy, I considered it important to establish the context both internally and internationally in which such images could be projected on the big screens.

The nationalization of the cinema industry, the Stalinist anti-cosmopolitan campaign, as well as the strict control of all cultural products that were to be involved in the new ideological fight, were all key factors in strengthening the control of the Soviet over the filmmaking process. On the other hand, the intense media coverage of pro-Soviet spying cases (the Amerasia case, Harry Dexter White, Alger Hiss, Whittaker Chambers), as well as the policies undertaken by the American Communist Party, have led to the emergence of government bodies whose aims were to identify the communist infiltration in the branches of the American economy.

The climate of anxiety and uncertainty, fueled by American conservative rhetoric, has led to the emergence of the House of Un-American Activities, which, through Hollywood hearings, has forced the main United States film studios to build and distribute the image of the communist wrecker. With the accumulation of bilateral tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, the commission had developed a plan to investigate subversive activities, seeking to uncover both Kremlin's loyal spies and communist sympathizers (or *fellow travellers*), with questioning sessions also extending among trade unions, universities and, more important to our subject, in the American film industry. One of the main consequences of Hollywood interrogators was the creation of black lists. The Hollywood hearings formed the pattern according to which a certain ideological or political adhesion and a refusal to disassociate oneself from them in public would make one inappropriate for further working in the film industry. Those who willingly refused to name names or give information about their close ones were considered communists, being ostracized and marginalized by the guild.

The second part of the chapters looks at the main themes, symbols, reasons and narrative threads used by the two film industries in an attempt to build consensus on the

need for internal vigilance and external combatability. Hollywood films gave a visual identity to the *communist spy*, which embodies the opposite of the democratic virtues of the Americans (the saboteur was characterized as a manipulator, cunning, a defiant, drained of individuality, an atheist, anti-intellectual, apathic, criminal, thief, brisler). The profile on the communist spy was to be present on the big screen for forty years, but never with as many diabolical valents as in 1950's. The many films presented follow largely a common pattern: Seeking to exert as much influence as possible in the key industrial fields of the United States (shipbuilding, war technologies, nuclear industry), the Soviets already active in America are turning to American individuals disappointed by the capitalist system, to whom they offer a cosmetized image of the communist system: a utopian, egalitarian world in which the state is guarding the welfare of its citizens. The thing that brought all the sympathizers together was the huge insecurity and fragility of the latter, as well as their desire of seeking revenge against the American system. Using good/bad binary structures the American film mirrored the internal atmosphere of the 50's

If *The Iron Curtain* brings into the spotlight acts of industrial espionage, the *Red Manace* shows images that capture the subversive actions of the American communist world. Accusations against the communist enemy include the agitation of trade Union movements (*I Married a Communist*), the manipulation of african-american riots (*I was A Communist for the F. B.I.*), the outbreak of a biological war (*The Whip Hand*), or the destruction of the american family insitution (*My Son John*). If the communist enemy tries to destabilize the American order, one of the aims of film products is to assure the public of continuous vigilance of the instrument meant to fight the communist offensive at home: The Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The proof of the intensity of the anti-communist fight derives both from the significant number of productions and from intensity of the stereotyping of the opponent who has been carried to the limit of ridicule. A representative example is the movie *Big Jim McLain* (1952), the analysis of which is covered by a sub-chapter. Without any claims of esthetic or narrative nature, the film found a place in the history of propagandist cinema as one of the most virulent (and direct in purpose and method) cultural products of the Cold War.

The strict control of each stage of the production process, from script to distribution, led to a massive fall in the number of Soviet annual productions. Censorship mechanisms, public criticism, as well as new ideological rigors have affected every segment of the film creation process. Yet the powerful ideological message, accompanied by the image of the American enemy, would counterbalance western efforts of demonizing the soviet enemy.

The tendency toward war, the flaws in unsupervised capitalism, racial and gender discrimination were the main attributes for the image of US society as a whole. If Soviet cinema also showed the image of good American (a supporter of the communist movement), the narrative line drawn by the main anti-American films of the period turns him into an element incapable of being against the interests of the political-economic partnership.

The Russian Question // Russkiy vopros (1947) portrays the image of the corruption of American journalism, which is on a continuous mission to spread false information about the intentions of the Soviet Union. Militarism, global expansion thirst, as well as the embassy's involvement in anti-Soviet espionage are found in *Farewell, America* (1951). The image of the American saboteur working in the service of the capitalist-military partnership is also the main subject of *Court of Honor // Sud Chesti* (1948). Racism, social clivality and hatred toward the marginal categories represent the *attributes* of the United States in *Silvery Dust // Serenbryannaia Pyl* (1953). The involvement of the US in the affairs of other states is portrayed in the film *The Conspiracy of the Doomed // Obrechyonnikk Zagouvor* (1950).

Another group of anti-american productions sought, through a revisionist interpretation process of World War II, to provide a distorted portrait of United States involvement in the war. Both *Meeing on the Elbe // Vstreka na Elbe* (1949), *The Fall of Berlin // Padenniye Berlina* (1949) and the *Battle of Stalingrad // Stalalalingskaya Bitva* provided portrayals of the american enemy, who sought to exercise their influence in post-war Europe, although, according to the film's script, Stalin has the sole merit for winning the war.

Chapter V aims to discuss two key moments of the cultural dialogue, facilitated by the relief of the post-Stalinist period: The Unite States National exhibition in Moscow

in 1959, followed by the historical visit to the United States of the new Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev. A subtle mean of exporting their own image, the National Exhibition gave the possibility (or the illusion of the possibility) to Soviet citizens to interact indirectly with the so-called American enemy. Presenting its latest technological, scientific and entertainment innovations, the export of soft culture wanted to create the image of the general welfare of American society, which can only be acquired by choosing capitalism to the detriment of communism

If the Americans chose to export their image by means of technology, the Soviet Union used Khrushchev's image. Thus, for the first time, American society would know a leader of the Soviet Union. Although Khrushchev's visit would not change the international status-quo, it would expose the image of the soviet leader to the American media, outlining an image not of a cold-blooded calculated dictator, but rather of a capricious megaloman, ready at any moment to endanger humanity. Even if the soviet society had seen a weakening of the Stalinist chain, the film industry continued to be subject to Communist censorship and the anti-Western topics continued to be perpetuated on the big screens. Whether we are talking about American saboteurs sent to Cuba (*Black Seagull // Chyornaya chayka* / (1962), terrorists trying to hijack United States planes (*Flight 713 Requests Permission to Land // 713 Prosit Posadku*) (1962) or spies sent to get their hands on Soviet scientific secrets (*A Blow in the Fog // Vysprel v Turmane*) (1963) Soviet films adapted their anti-American message to the new international events.

In Chapter VI, I have given a distinct role to analyzing how the German film industry has been linked to the policies of the Cold War, along with the division of the German state. The role that the film industry in East Germany played in projecting the image of the enemy in the first part of the Cold War is important for two reasons: First, both anti-American films and the films aimed against West Germany exhibited on the East-German big screens illustrates the way in which the film industries in the Soviet Union's sphere of influence took on both the message and the tools for the construction of the enemy (foreign invasion, militarization, moral degradation), which the Soviet industry distributed on the big screens after the end of World War II. Secondly, the analysis of the East-German antiamerican pictures highlights the mechanisms behind the process of shaping the enemy image depending on the current ideology.

The export of American policies to Germany is the main topic in films such as *The Condemned Village // Das Verurteilte Dorf* (1952) and *Unmarked Freight // Gefährliche Fracht* (1953). Moreover, the image of the American and west-german spy has been combined in productions such as *Hoegler's Mission // Der Auftrag Hoglers* (1950), *Irregular Traffic // Zugverkehr Unregelmäßig* (1951) and *The Solvay File // Geheimakten Solvay* (1953).

If espionage films had the purpose of warning the public of the imminent danger of infiltration by foreign agents on the Eastern German territory, seeking to peacefully destroy the socialist community, some East German productions have sought to reinterpret the history of World War II to the detriment of the United States, linking Hitler's power to the support offered by the big American corporations. In order to legitimize its anti-American rhetoric and the geopolitical interests of the Soviet Union, East-German cinema had to facilitate the transition from the Nazi enemy of World War II to the new enemy of the Cold War. The main example is the film *Council of the Gods // Der Rat der Gotter* (1950), which puts forward the idea of collaboration between US capitalist interests and Nazi industry, during the Second World War.

A special set of movies that portray the American enemy were the so-called *osterns*, the Eastern European version of the famous american western genre, which took place in the arid areas of the United States during the 19th century. The *osterns* films have raised the issue of the discriminatory policies of the Americans in the 19th century. Thus, respecting the concept of an enemy, the East-German version of the western (called *ostern*, or *Indianerfilm*) would offer a Marxist-Leninist perspective on the American Indians' fight against colonialism. The didactical role of the works would be fulfilled precisely by the appearance of the Americans as an enemy.

The refusal of the Federal Republic of Germany to join the cinematic Cold War highlights the independent direction of West German film studios. The desire to remove from collective memory the horrors of Nazism have prompted West German films to experience new cinema genres.⁷

The approach of both anti-communist and anti-American themes was not confined to one film genre.. Even though the genre predominant for both film industries has

⁷ Sabine Hake, *German National Cinema*, ed. Routledge, 2002, p. 118

engraved around the *detective movie*, the image of the enemy has found its place on the big screen in comedies, dramas, thrillers, historical adaptations, or religious films. A particular genre, which is subject to a separate analysis in Chapter VII, is the science fiction film. Heavily influenced by the tense atmosphere of the 1960s, Joseph McCarthy's rhetoric and anxiety about the arms race, science-fiction has proved to be an optimal vehicle for alerting American society to the *foreign* danger. Thus, I have chosen to structure this chapter in accordance with the main sub-themes of this film genre (invasions from outer space, fear of nuclear radiation, post-apocalyptic scenarios). The research of visual images is accompanied by a presentation of the evolution of nuclear technology, as well as the importance attributed to the new weapon by both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Using a wide spectrum of narrative threads, these films often illustrated an enemy who, like the image of the communist saboteur, sought to destroy the American society. Whether we are talking about outer space invasions (*Invaders from Mars* (1953), *Red Planet Mars* (1952) *I married a Monster from Outer Space* (1958), *This Island Earth* (1955) *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956)), nuclear radiation themes (*Them* (1954), *It Came from Beneath the Sea* (1955), *The Attack of the Giant Leeches* (1959) *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)), the image of the foreign threat shares the characteristics of the Soviet enemy: Mysterious identity, lack of individuality, sentimental sterility, the desire to change Western society from the ground.

I chose to end the chapter with a case study of a film that is essential not only in the context of the 60's, but also for the the whole cultural Cold War, *Dr Strangelove or how I Stopped Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). More than any cultural product of that time, Stanley Kubrick's film perfectly encapsulates the fears, anxiety, and the absurd of the 60's Cold War, all against the background of a satirical comedy that ridicules both the image of the Soviet enemy and the political-military ideology of the United States.

Chapter VIII is meant to emphasize the valences of the image of the enemy, along with the period of the desensitization of the US-Soviet relations in the first part of Brezhnev's term of office. Even if the US film industry was to distance itself from the stereotypes of the 50's, the military involvement in the Vietnam War gave rise to the image of a new enemy: *the asian communist*. Its characterization is reminiscent of the

treatment given to the Japanese enemy during World War II. The vietnamese enemy was the victim of a racist, sub-human and anti-oriental portrait. Similar to the post-1941 war films, the main propaganda means used by Americans to demonise their enemy was constructed around anti-orientalist racism. Presenting a image of *the other* as subhuman, wild, barbaric, the film studios have at the same time shaped an image of the American military as a messenger of civilization and democracy. Thus, the enemy comes to be called gook (pejorative term used with a negative connotation to Asian), dink, scroungy little jungle bugs, slopes, ducts, zippermouth.⁸

On the other hand, movies like such as *The Green Berets* (1968) and *Night of the Dragon* (1965) warned the american public about the ongoing Soviet involvement in other States' domestic policies, while stressing the need for US military intervention.

In the last chapter of this research, I have tried to present the main portrayals of the enemy used by Soviet and American productions during the 80's. Following a cyclical pattern, the long line of the filmographic portraits of the cold War enemy will find its outcome in the context of the escalation of tensions between the two actors, starting with the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. Incidents such as the bombing of the KAL-007 flight, the military exercise Able Archer, and the involvement of the United States in Central America conflicts were only part of the motivation behind a new cinema attack, similar to both intensity and ridicule of scenarios, with the hot Cold War timeframe.

The reignition of conservative anti-communist sentiments has found its personification in the face of President Ronald Reagan, whose militant rhetoric has helped freeze bilateral relations. On the other hand, the early 80's were the silver age of ideologically driven productions, which was overclassed only by Stalinist films. The careful analysis of the messages of the two film industries reveal images of the two enemies, who, although at opposing ends politically, ideologically, economically and socially, share the same vision of *the other*.

The militaristic intentions of the enemy are illustrated in both the Soviet films the *Incident at the Coordinates 36-80 // Sluchay v kvadrate 36-80* (1982), as well as in

⁸ Ralph R. Donald, „The Ugly American Syndrome in Films of the Vietnam War”, in Paul Laukides, Linda K. Fuller (ed.), *Beyond the Stars: Themes and Ideologies in American Popular Film*, 1996, ed. Popular Press, p. 89.

Invasion U.S.A. (1985) and *Red Dawn* (1984). The topic of involvement in another state's internal policies is also surprised both in the Soviet production *The Secret in Vila "Greta" // Tayna villy "Greta"* (1983) and in *Rambo III* (1988). Features such as excessive violence, human rights violations, racial discrimination, militarism, duplicity were attributes used by both the cold War's cultural policies.

The anti-communist rhetoric of the Reagan period, justified the production of films *Missing in Action* (1984), *Missing in Action 2: The Beginning* (1985), *Uncommon Valor* (1985), *The Hanoi Hilton* (1987), as well as the *Rambo* movie sequels. Some of the anti-communist productions of the period preferred a revisionist interpretation of the Vietnam War, which would facilitate the US Army's revenge. The films that address this issue are thus building their action around the premises of US prisoners of war who are still trapped in Asian prisons.

Thirty years after the break-up of the Soviet Union, it is still difficult to make a statement about the influence of the cinema message during the Cold War. But what can be decided is that the importance of the film was recognized during every term of office of the leaders of the two global super-powers. Having the power to shape thinking patterns by using distorted images, motion pictures have adapted to each Cold War chapter, becoming both a product of history and a maker of one.

Even though this doctoral thesis does not have a claim of completeness, it sought to describe, study, analyze and compare the main attitudes, motives, themes and symbols that found their way on american and soviet screens engaged in the cultural battle of the Cold War. This study aims to be an original contribution to the historiography of the enemy imagology and cultural Cold War.

Key Words: enemy image, stereotype, cultural Cold War, portrayal, cultural policies, cinema.

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