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IMAGES OF THE SYMBOLIC OTHER IN CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE USSR AND THE USA DURING THE COLD WAR: A CASE STUDY OF “SEVEN DAYS IN MAY”

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Abstract. *Introduction.* The article examines cultural communication between the USSR and the USA from the 1960s to the 1980s. The case selected for the study includes criticism of the most significant aspects of the socio-political life of the USA – specifically, the political system, the institution of the presidency, and civic values – during the Cold War period. *Methods and materials.* The analysis uses historical constructivism and a range of supporting methods: descriptive analysis, discourse analysis, and semiotics. In addition to publicly available versions of the novel, plays, and films, the authors use unpublished archival sources. *Analysis.* The study focuses on the Soviet media campaign around the novel *Seven Days in May* by Fletcher Knebel and Charles W. Bailey II, which includes literary translations, plays, and films. The experience of “symmetric” film adaptations in the USSR and the USA has been studied. Particular attention is paid to the technique of on-screen modelling, which enabled the authors to offer a critical reflection on contemporary realities in the rival powers. *Results.* The analysed approaches to interpreting the novel, despite the variety of channels through which its content was disseminated, reveal commonalities and patterns in the construction of the symbolic Other. The criticism of the ambiguity surrounding political processes in the USA by the authors of the novel largely corresponded with established propaganda techniques employed by the Soviet media. The reflection of real processes in the relations between the two states is traced in the dynamic development of the images of the colonel, general, and president in the various versions of the novel. *Authors’ contribution.* Maksim Kazyuchits analysed a range of literary and media sources – the original novel *Seven Days in May* by Knebel and Bailey and its translations into Russian. He compared the translated versions with the source text and identified omissions in the 1966 and 1990 editions. His research also encompassed the radio play and the television production *The Last Argument of Kings*, as well as archival materials from the Russian State Archive of Cinema and Photo Documents and the Archive of the State Television and Radio Company. Nina Sputnitskaia worked at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, where she collected and analysed documents related to theatrical productions, studied the personal archives of the creators of media products, and examined both the television film *The Conspiracy* and the script *Hello, Comrade President!* *Funding.* The study was funded by RSF, Grant № 22-18-00305-P, “The images of enemy in Cold War popular culture: their content, contemporary reception and usage in Russian and U.S. symbolic politics”.

Key words: images of enemy, constitutive Other, Cold War, media campaign in the USSR, criticism of the institution of the presidency, *Seven Days in May*.

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ОБРАЗЫ СИМВОЛИЧЕСКОГО ДРУГОГО В КУЛЬТУРНОЙ КОММУНИКАЦИИ СССР И США ПЕРИОДА ХОЛОДНОЙ ВОЙНЫ: КЕЙС «СЕМЬ ДНЕЙ В МАЕ»

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Статья посвящена изучению культурной коммуникации СССР и США в 1960–1980-х годах. Выбранный для исследования кейс содержит критику наиболее важных сторон общественной и политической жизни США (политическое устройство, институт президентства, гражданские ценности) в период холодной войны. *Методы и материалы.* Анализ осуществляется с применением исторического конструктивизма и комплекса вспомогательных методов: дескриптивного, дискурс-анализа, семиотики. Авторы помимо общедоступных версий романа, пьес, фильмов привлекают неопубликованные архивные источники (РГАЛИ, РГАСФД, Архив Гостелерадио). *Анализ.* В фокусе исследования – советская медиакомпания романа «Семь дней в мае» Ф. Нибела и Ч.У. Бэйли, которую составили литературные переводы, пьесы, фильмы. Изучен опыт «симметричных» экранизаций в СССР и США. Особое внимание уделено приему моделирования на экране (построение нарратива на основе воображаемой, гипотетически возможной ситуации), который позволял авторам критически оценить современность в конкурирующих державах. *Результаты.* Проанализированные подходы в трактовке романа, при разнообразии каналов трансляции его содержания (театр, радио, кино, ТВ), позволяют говорить об общности и закономерностях в конструировании символического Другого. Критика структурной неоднородности и неопределенности государственных процессов в США авторов «Семь дней в мае» во многом согласовывалась с устоявшимися пропагандистскими приемами советских медиа. Отражение реальных процессов во взаимоотношениях двух государств прослеживается в динамичном развитии образов полковника Кейси, генерала Скотта и президента Лимена в различных версиях романа с 1960-х гг. вплоть до конца холодной войны. *Вклад авторов.* М.Ф. Казючиц проанализировал литературные источники – оригинальный роман Флетчера Нибела и Чарльза Бэйли «Семь дней в мае» и его переводы на русский язык (провел сверку версий с источником и выявил купюры в русском переводе 1966 и 1990 гг.); проанализировал радиопьесу и телевизионную постановку 1983 г. «Последний довод королей», провел работу с документами РГАСФД, Архива Гостелерадио. Н.Ю. Спутницкая провела работу в РГАЛИ, собрала и проанализировала документы по театральным постановкам, изучила личные архивы авторов медиапродуктов, провела анализ телефильма «Заговор» (1971) и сценария «Здравствуйте, товарищ президент!» (1990). *Финансирование.* Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда № 22-18-00305-П «Образы врага в массовой культуре холодной войны: содержание, современная рецепция и использование в символической политике России и США».

Ключевые слова: образ врага, конституирующий Другой, холодная война, медиакомпания в СССР, критика института президентства, «Семь дней в мае».

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Introduction. The problem of constructing the symbolic Other in the 1960s–1980s in literature and screen culture was developing rapidly and actively shaped by the context of international relations between the USSR and the USA. The Cuban Missile Crisis, the Vietnam War, the subsequent *détente*, and the nuclear arms limitation treaties were all reflected in the artistic culture and propaganda of both countries. The subject of this article is to examine the mechanisms of constructing the symbolic Other, especially the hostile Other, within the framework of artistic discourse, including theatre, radio, cinema, and television. The object of the research is the materials of the media campaign related to the release of the Russian-language translation of the novel *Seven Days in May* by Fletcher Knebel and Charles Bailey and its subsequent theatrical, radio, film, and television adaptations, which spanned nearly three decades, until the collapse of the USSR. The first Russian translation appeared at the height of the Vietnam War in 1964, and the final script, which was never filmed, dates back to 1990. This case is of particular interest not only because of its chronological scope, which encompasses one of the most dramatic periods in recent political history, but also due to the wide range of cultural channels through which the novel was disseminated. Taken together, these materials exhibit numerous characteristic features that make it possible to identify patterns in the construction of the symbolic hostile Other – an image that is heterogeneous, structurally complex, and historically dynamic – while simultaneously revealing the mechanisms through which Soviet identity was articulated.

Seven Days in May: Russian Translations of the Novel and the Foreign Policy Context

The first Russian edition of the novel *Seven Days in May* [1] was published by the Military Publishing House of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR (Voenizdat), four years after the American edition and two years after the release of the eponymous film directed by John Frankenheimer. The translation was carried out by writers, diplomatic workers, and intelligence officers Pavel Viduetsky and Anatoly Gorsky. “To lift the veil on what the ‘American way of life’ and the

notorious ‘free world’ actually represent” [1, p. 18], Major-General A.M. Shevchenko noted in the introductory article. In the same piece, he briefly but pointedly noted the ambiguous reception of the novel in the United States. Shevchenko also sought to place the translation within the contemporary foreign policy context – specifically, the widespread public anti-militarist and anti-American sentiment surrounding the Vietnam War. In 1990, the second edition of the novel was published [2]. In the introductory article, it was framed within the new context of cultural and political relations between the USSR and the USA at the end of the Cold War. “Important agreements have been signed between our countries, diplomats are working tirelessly, and the new political thinking has made it possible to establish contacts in the military sphere as well,” [2, p. 336] Alexey Fayngar noted.

An analysis of the censorship edits in both editions reveals the content that shaped the image of the symbolic Other. First, the foreign policy context of the 1960s influenced the omission of all reference to China in the 1966 Russian translation. In the original novel, the relations between the USSR and China are assessed as a purely pragmatic alliance – if not equal, then at least suggesting that China would soon possess comparable military capabilities. However, it is the Soviet Union that did not inspire confidence among Americans as prone to political treachery.

In one scene, CIA Director Lieberman reports to President Lyman that the Soviets have begun secretly producing components for nuclear missiles in violation of an agreement and shows delivery routes on a map. The president speculates about possible China’s complicity:

“The lines multiplied and crisscrossed.

‘Has anything like this turned up in China?’ asked Lyman.

‘Nope,’ Lieberman said. ‘Maybe Feemerov’s cheating on his Peiping buddies, too.’

‘If this is true,’ Lyman said, ‘the treaty is dead. And maybe the world too’” [11, p. 211] (перевод: «Линии на карте росли, перекрещиваясь друг с другом.

– “Похоже, они направлены к Китаю?” – спросил Лимен. – “Нет”, – ответил Либермен. – “Советский премьер, возможно, обманул и своих пекинских друзей”. – “Если это правда, то договору конец. А может быть, и

всему миру» [2, pp. 194-195]). The text in italics was absent from the 1966 edition.

The omissions suggest that by the second half of the 1960s, the Soviet Union was represented in its own propaganda as the constitutive Other for the peoples of all countries within its sphere of influence. China was no exception, as can be seen from the example of cinema. The establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the PRC was accompanied by the strengthening of cultural ties. For example, large-scale chronicle and documentary films such as *Liberated China* (1950) and *In the New Beijing* (1950), directed by Sergei Gerasimov, and *The Victory of the Chinese People* (1950), directed by Leonid Varlamov, were released in both the USSR and China. These films drew historical and cultural parallels between the two countries and presented the Chinese and Soviet peoples as fraternal. However, the key motif was that China had embarked on the path of socialist development under the auspices of the USSR and that Mao Zedong was portrayed as the leader of the Chinese people and a devoted follower and continuer of Stalin's cause.

As of the time of the novel's release in 1962, China did not yet possess nuclear weapons (although the text refers to a number of successful tests). This theme contributes to the futuristic geopolitical landscape of 1974 – the year in which the novel's events take place – and reflects the authors' assumptions regarding the prospects for the development of Soviet-Chinese relations. However, the historical context of the Cultural Revolution likely predetermined the complete removal of the Chinese theme from the 1966 Russian translation. For example, Lyman's reflections – “With atomic weapons already stacked like cordwood and Peiping boasting of a third hydrogen test, there wasn't much time left” [1, p. 49] (перевод: «В условиях, когда Пекин уже накопил достаточно атомного оружия и хвастает третьим испытанием водородной бомбы, осталось не так много времени» [2, p. 50]) – were omitted from the 1966 edition but reinstated and stored in the 1990 translation.

Second, despite Shevchenko's remark in the introductory article to the 1966 edition regarding the “boring” American stereotypes in depicting the USSR (e.g., treachery and rudeness), all passages portraying Soviet politics as duplicitous were

nonetheless excluded from the Russian translation. In the scene depicting the confrontation between Lyman and Scott, the general reproaches the president for inaction: “And we emphasised until we were blue in the face that it was folly to sign a document which left a clear loophole – namely, that one country or the other could assemble warheads in the one place as fast as it took them apart in another under the eyes of the neutral inspectors. The United States, of course, would never do that. But the Russians would – and they are doing precisely that” [1, pp. 323-324] (перевод: «Мы неоднократно говорили вам и доказывали с пеной у рта, что неразумно подписывать документ, который оставляет явную лазейку, а именно: та или иная сторона сразу же после демонтажирования в одном месте в присутствии нейтральных инспекторов может приступить к их сборке в другом. Соединенные Штаты, конечно, никогда этого не сделают. Но русские сделают – и они именно это уже и делают» [2, pp. 287-288]). The final phrase was omitted from the 1966 edition but reinstated in the 1990 version. This omission reflects one of the key attributes of the symbolic self-identification of the USSR as a peacekeeping nation, one that strictly observes the norms of modern diplomacy and international law and is uniquely qualified to lead the communist world. Scott's claim regarding the USA here suggests that similar strategies were employed to construct the image of the symbolic constitutive Other in both the USA and the USSR [9; 12]. The characteristics of the Soviet Union in the original text came into conflict with the image of the USSR as the constitutive Other for satellite states. The depiction of the Kremlin as “rude and narrow-minded”, which fully aligns with the panslavist understanding of the USSR in the Western cultural tradition [3], was likewise subject to censorship.

The novel, theatre, and radio

Adaptations of the novel for theatre and radio in the 1960s–1970s are associated with the name of Vladimir Tokarev, who collaborated with major authors working with archival materials on military history and foreign policy.

The play *Seven Days in May* was submitted for distribution by the Theatre Department of the Ministry of Culture. Work on the adaptation lasted

for more than two years, and the archives preserved at least three versions of the script. On 14 March 1966, Tokarev received a report containing extensive critical comments. According to the editorial board, it was necessary to strengthen the symbolic portrayal of Scott as a “candidate for fascist dictators” and of Lyman as a figure “in whose real politics and striving to prevent a military catastrophe we recognise the traits of Kennedy” [7, p. 2]. The reviewers emphasised, “The main point of the novel is not the conspiracy... but the clash of two worldviews, two political systems, two Americas” [7, p. 2].

The image of a *doubled country*, widely employed in Soviet propaganda, was contrasted with the unity and integrity of the Soviet state. Further correspondence between the author and the editorial board, followed by a reasoned refusal, exemplifies a clear directive from the state.

Nevertheless, in 1967, Tokarev’s play *Seven Days in May* was broadcast on Leningrad Radio. The author subjected the text to substantial reworking: the character of Casey was given a significant function as narrator. Links were added to the novel’s text, as well as the direct speech of Casey, who, on behalf of the author, offers moral judgements on the characters. The figure of the colonel was also transformed: from a career military man, he evolved into a *raisonneur* well-known in Russian literary classics. Casey disregards a number of rules of trade ethics: he is convinced that Lyman will publicly expose the conspiracy and that the representatives of the “militarists” will be punished. A similar motif is found in the introductory article to the first Russian edition of the novel, in which Shevchenko accuses Lyman of prioritising the prestige of the country and its state integrity over the truth. Casey’s interpretation becomes one-sided: for him, there are no regulations that other characters follow. For the same reason, his family is removed from the adaptation. These changes to the character largely reflect the trends of the Thaw period in Soviet culture [15, p. 11]. Casey’s final exclamation – “What was it, I ask. What was it? What?” – highlights a key aspect of the symbolic hostile Other: in America, the leader of the state never tells the truth, even at the detriment of his own people.

Beginning with the radio play, the adaptations of the novel introduce symbolic elements that

construct a highly specific image of the USA. For example, in the radio play, a recurring leitmotif is employed: following the announcer’s words, “And at this very time, at seven airfields of the country”, a montage phrase follows, consisting of sound effects (the hum of aeroplanes; the roll call of the military – “One-two... Base ‘U’... El Paso...” – and the strains of a military march). This auditory montage serves to create a symbolic image of one of the Americas: a militarised nation, permeated by Cold War paranoia – the America of General Scott.

The first screen versions: *Seven Days in May* (USA) and *The Conspiracy* (USSR)

Seven Days in May, directed by John Frankenheimer, was made without investment from major commercial or military circles in the United States. Contemporary scholars interpret the film as continuing the traditions of criticising authority and paranoia in society established by Frank Capra and situate it within the protest and critical context of the 1960s–1970s [13, pp. 161–164]. Some authors compare the “humiliatingly low” approval rating of 29% received by President Lyman for his pacifist stance with the similarly low ratings received by President Bush for his militarism [14, pp. 19–20]. In the early 1960s, concerns were voiced in American political circles about the potential negative impact of *Seven Days in May* on the international standing of the USA [13, pp. 161–162].

The film was not purchased for Soviet cinema distribution, but it was known to the professional audience, and its influence can be seen, for example, in the television film *Seventeen Moments of Spring* directed by Tatyana Lioznova. The character of Casey aroused increased interest among Soviet authors and reviewers due to his internal contradictions. As a typical representative of the symbolic hostile Other, he renounces the ethos of a military officer in favour of the triumph of civil values. Like the motif of the “two Americas”, this character highlights the flaws of militarism and the military and political power of the USA. Thus, in both the radio play and the film adaptation *The Conspiracy*, Casey was interpreted in a similar fashion by actor Valentin Gaft even before the appearance of a comparable figure – the reflective military officer

Isaev-Stierlitz (Vyacheslav Tikhonov) – in Lioznova's aforementioned work. In the early 1970s, Tokarev again approached the Yermolova Theatre with a proposal titled "On the issue of staging the novel *Seven Days in May* by F. Knebel and Ch. Bailey II" [5, pp. 1-3], in which he proposed to "clarify its ideological orientation and, for this purpose, specify and, in some cases, revise certain elements of the plot" [5, p. 3]. This version envisaged the removal of the motif of confrontation between Lyman and ordinary Americans (which is present in the novel). Instead, the American people are presented as being unanimously supportive of the president, his peace initiatives, and "especially the signing of the nuclear disarmament treaty" [5, p. 3].

Three years prior to the events portrayed in the novel *Seven Days in May*, in 1971, Soviet Central Television broadcast the television play *The Conspiracy*, based on a script by Aleksandr Rokhlin and Anatoly Shaykevich and directed by Svetlana Annapolskaia. In *The Conspiracy*, the symbolic hostile Other is constructed through a set of recognisable symbols associated with the United States in Soviet screen culture of the time. The opening sequence presents an aerial panorama of skyscrapers and the Statue of Liberty, filmed as a miniature sculpture – isolated and lost in the dark – to convey a sense of America's instability. The film makes extensive use of documentary footage, blending it with staged scenes, and the events are accompanied by an off-screen narration. The exposition creates a sense of authenticity through editing of newsreel clips: demonstrations, elections, and presidential imageries, with John F. Kennedy appearing most frequently. The editing rhythm of these chronicle shots and the accompanying commentary reinforce the impression of instability and internal disunity of the country. The staged episodes, shot in monochrome, organically fit into the chronicle texture. The off-screen narrator, adopting a condescending tone, explains that the film supplements the work of the political reporters – as Bailey and Knebel, the authors of *Seven Days in May*, are introduced. The narrator emphasises the belletristic nature of the source material and the timidity of the authors, thereby justifying the need for an "augmented" account of the events portrayed in the novel. According to the logic of the film, the elections in the USA are depicted as

a boisterous spectacle watched by Americans. The Soviet filmmakers expand the narrative, introducing new themes and "previously unknown facts" [6].

Following documentary footage of Washington, the audience sees Valentin Gaft's Casey walking through the Pentagon corridors. The story of conspiracy begins with the colonel's reflections on the ECOMCON base ("Emergency Communications Control") and a phrase that stuck in his memory, accidentally dropped by his friend and colleague Mutt Henderson: "We spend more time training for seizure than for prevention" [11, p. 14] (перевод: «Мы больше учим солдат как штурмовать различные объекты, а не как их защищать»). Shots of the assassination and funeral of the Kennedy brothers are interspersed with the colonel's thoughts on the planned conspiracy. However, it should be noted that Gaft's hero is still used as a *raisonneur*, a representative of the authorial voice, and therefore yields the dramatic centre to the president and the general at the film's climax.

The president's family – in the novel, he is a husband, father, and grandfather – is absent in *The Conspiracy*, but his affection for his dog Trimmer, his childhood-rooted, longstanding friendship with Senator Girard, and his trusted relationship with secretary Esther are emphasised. The president is portrayed as measured, prudent, and calm; in moments of crisis, he slowly smokes a pipe. A side table with spirits near his desk and other domestic details aim to elicit viewer sympathy. The divergence in the interpretation of Lyman and Scott in both the novel and the American film adaptation is profound. Masculinity is a key marker in Cold War representations. In the novel, Scott is characterised by excessive masculinity: his athletic build, massive jaw, and obsession with physical fitness [8, p. 174]. Knebel and Bailey portray him as obsessed with aggression and war, that is, his abnormality, despite seemingly universal recognition. A parallel can also be drawn with the visual tradition of American comic book heroes, whose exaggerated masculinity is a key trait (Superman, Captain America) [16]. The president's second ally, Senator Raymond Clark, reminds Lyman that according to polls of political sociologists, the president's popularity has seriously fallen – to 29%. It is his cooperation

with the Russians that has led to this sharp internal opposition, polarising both society and the political elite – and triggering the conflict of the “two Americas”.

Documentary scenes in *The Conspiracy* – such as Ku Klux Klan members burning a cross in protest against collaboration with the USSR – serve to construct the image of the American ordinary person, who is characterised by cruelty and obscurantism. The president and his policies find no support among the public. The symbolic hostile Other is further developed through documentary footage of American missile launches and nuclear weapons testing, with scenes depicting their devastating consequences.

The president declares that he shares Scott's assessment of communism but argues that the issue lies in the methods used to confront it, not in the sympathies.

The visual style of *The Conspiracy* constantly emphasises its journalistic and documentary character. To depict the secret military base of General Scott, chronicle and documentary footage are employed: robotic-like US soldiers training and marching – the “heirs” of Nazi Germany.

It is curious that the climatic confrontation – the verbal duel between the president and the general – portrays Scott in an unheroic light, far removed from the charismatic figure played by Burt Lancaster in the American film. The sharpness of the dialogue between the opponents is mirrored in the camera angles, which, through visual means, shows how the president at times gains the upper hand in the confrontation and at other times loses ground. The resignation is accepted, the document – Admiral Barnswell's testimony about the conspiracy – is destroyed, and the narrator concludes, “But the country will ever know the real reason for this resignation. This story never was and could not be.”

For the Soviet television audience, this story presented a disturbing image of contemporary American society: an honourable authority figure must act dishonestly; must conceal – and even that cannot protect him. In the final scene, Lyman is shot at a press conference. *The Conspiracy* ends with empty streets and a funeral procession. The final shot is an empty Oval Office. The divergence in the interpretation of Lyman and the people in these screen versions turns out to

be more significant than the portrayal of Casey. The shift of focus from the individual moral dilemma of the military-citizen (Casey) to the tragedy of the head of state and the nation seems characteristic of how the novel was reinterpreted in Soviet mass culture during the 1970s. Tokarev's rejection by the Yermolova Theatre in 1971 directly indicates a characteristic change in the portrayal of the symbolic hostile Other. And the film asserts the notion of collective guilt – that of both government and people.

***The Last Argument of Kings:* a TV report based on the novel**

The TV film *The Last Argument of Kings* (Posledniy dovod koroley, 1983, directed by Viktor Kisin) was made in a dialogical and journalistic style. Compared to the previous version, the voiceover commentator, who evaluates the characters' actions, is brought to a logical conclusion. The authorial perspective is clearly differentiated. Appearing on screen is Vladimir Dunaev, a prominent international journalist; a well-known TV presenter (*Today in the World* (*Segodnia v Mire*) and *International Panorama* (*Mezhdunarodnaia Panorama*)); and the screenwriter and the originator of the film's concept. He notes that since the novel was written by reporters who were familiar with the American political background, the film will adhere to a corresponding reportage manner that stylistically resembles the Soviet television reports of the 1970s–1980s on the United States from *International Panorama*. Dunaev delivers a reflective monologue at the close of each episode, seeking to place the events of the novel and the film within the context of recent US political history.

The Last Argument of Kings begins as a TV report on Americans' fascination with historical battle reenactments, especially those that commemorate victories, the commentator notes. Dunaev draws a direct parallel between Americans' distrust of President Lyman and the impeachment of Nixon, who, like the fictional president from the novel, signed the first treaty with the USSR on the limitation of nuclear weapons.

The film makes extensive use of various images of the United States, both in terms of

imagery and narrative. Three main categories can be identified:

1. Elements of state symbolism – the US flag, coat of arms, and institutional emblems, as well as archival footage of the Pentagon and the White House;

2. Images of militarism (military aggression) of the USA – documentary footage of US military personnel engaged in foreign conflicts; and

3. Images of peaceful, everyday life in America – fictional scenes of leisure activities (e.g., bowling, horse racing, and hunting), along with documentary footage of daily life in Washington.

The narrative, where the USA is shown as an aggressive militaristic state, is constructed through additional material introduced by the screenwriters – including dialogues, voiceover commentary, and episode content – that goes beyond the original novel. This revisionist narrative and the addition of new plot lines continue the tradition established by the earlier film *The Conspiracy*. For instance, in the novel, Colonel Casey first learns of the secret base when meeting with his fellow Colonel Henderson. The book contains only vague reflections of Casey on military service and camaraderie. However, their meeting in *The Last Argument of Kings* is a frank conversation between two career officers cynically discussing the country and its army.

In their effort to construct a symbolic hostile Other, the authors do not restrict themselves to rewriting dialogue. They add entirely new episodes absent from the source text. For instance, in the novel, Secretary of the Treasury Todd remains in the White House with the president. However, in the film, he carries out Lyman's task and goes to organise a counter-conspiracy. He arranges a meeting of the heads of corporations not affiliated with the military-industrial complex in the well-known Academy Park and proposes that they help block Scott's conspiracy – the proposal is accepted.

Hello, Comrade President!

The screenwriter of *The Conspiracy*, Anatoly Shaykevich, once again returned to the novel by Knebel and Bailey during the late Soviet period and wrote a new screenplay titled *Hello, Comrade President!*. This time, however, the playwright

shifted his focus to the political and social realities of his own time, constructing a fictional narrative around an attempted coup against the president of the USSR. While he meticulously followed the structure of the original political thriller, his version gradually drifted towards the conventions of the action genre. In *Hello, Comrade President!*, the characters are ambiguous. (The manuscript was approved, according to the visa from the State Committee for Cinematography (Goskino), on 11 October 1990).

The main character, Colonel Igor Voronin, races along the Garden Ring on a Honda in the opening scene, and a stream of news pours down on him:

“– The newly elected Chancellor of the United Federal Germany, Franz Clausman, has declared that he does not recognise the post-war borders! The people of Germany, he said, will never accept the separation of East Prussia, Silesia, the Sudetenland, and other historically German territories from the homeland.

– Mass demonstrations across Germany in support of his demands.

– A demarche by Poland!

– The President of Lithuania, Vytautas Damulis, has announce that his republic will soon apply for NATO membership.

– Demonstration of refugees from the Baltic States on Red Square!” [4, p. 2].

At the centre of the plot is Marshal Leonid Artamonov. The protagonist learns of the conspiracy from Yuri – an old friend who now serves as the head of staff of “Quarantine”, a unit with one hundred officers and three thousand soldiers at its disposal. From this point, the narrative unfolds in a manner reminiscent of *Seven Days in May*, though adjusted to reflect the late Soviet realities.

The attempted coup against President Uvarov is scheduled for the Sunday when the Supreme Council will be on holiday, the chairman and the minister of foreign affairs will be away in Italy, the minister of defence will be ill, and the president himself will be in a bunker in Achinsk.

A significant aspect of the characterisation of the president is his personal tragedy – the serious illness of his son – and a symbolic scene set in a church. Dmitry Ivanovich Uvarov and his wife, Irina Petrovna, visit the Archangel Cathedral in formal black. The scene highlights the

composure of the president's wife in dealing with the press. Both the president and the first lady are shown to know how to present themselves before the camera and seem to evoke the author's sympathies.

This script concludes with a press conference of the President, unfolding alongside the staged series of murders. However, the president firmly denies any claims of a conspiracy orchestrated by the generals. The moral of *Hello, Comrade President!* is that all power is criminal. The script was never produced, and a year later, the country in which the events were set ceased to exist.

Results. The shared approach to interpreting the novel, combined with the variety of channels for disseminating its content (theatre, radio, cinema, and television), enables us to identify clear patterns in the construction of the symbolic Other – not only as an enemy figure.

The symbolic image of the USSR as a peacekeeping country, strictly following the ethos of international relations and the cause of peace, underpinned the editorial and censorship amendments made to the first Russian edition of the novel. The Soviet Union positioned itself as the leader of the communist world and, undoubtedly, as the constituting Other. In this regard, any references to China as an equal partner – especially given the deterioration of political relations in the second half of the 1960s – were deemed unacceptable.

At the same time, the image of the state – the leader of the free world – was so significant for the identity of the USSR that even minor derogatory remarks in the novel were excluded, particularly in the 1990 edition. For example, at the aforementioned meeting of Colonels Casey and Henderson, the latter is the first to mention a secret base. However, the 1990 Russian edition retained the censorship of 1966.

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons for the great interest of Soviet propaganda in the American novel was the conceptual framework set by its authors, who presented the structural heterogeneity and, at the same time, a certain uncertainty of state processes in the USA. This approach – criticism from within – gained prominence, which is clearly seen in the adaptations of the novel for theatre and radio performances. By the 1960s, Colonel Casey had

been transformed into a *raisonneur*, articulating the authors' critical stance on the unfolding events. Through Casey, the symbolic image of a hostile Other is constructed – a state portrayed as internally divided and therefore incapable of leading the capitalist world.

Although the figure of Colonel Casey Despite was somewhat toned down in the film adaptations *The Conspiracy* and *The Last Argument of Kings*, the key propaganda technique – critiquing the United States through its own cultural products – remained intact. Both Soviet film adaptations made extensive use of documentary newsreels, creating a form of “vertical montage” that aligned the novel's narrative with historical images and the characters' actions and speech. In this respect, it can be argued that the internal contradictions inherent in the construction of the symbolic hostile Other remained a stable element of Soviet discourse until the very end of the Cold War.

The interesting figure of President Lyman understandably attracted considerable attention from Soviet propagandists.

Throughout the media campaign examined in this article, Lyman consistently drew the interest of Soviet propaganda:

- in the 1960s, as a realist politician aware of the historical necessity of diplomatic arms control;
- in the 1970s, as a tragic figure opposing the system;
- and in the 1980s, as a cynical politician who views General Scott pragmatically as a dangerous rival.

A significant aspect in constructing the image of the symbolic hostile Other is the motif of the relationship between the president and the people. While in the 1960s, Soviet theatre adaptations downplayed Lyman's unpopularity, the 1970s saw the state and the people depicted as a unified force (*The Conspiracy*). In the 1980s, however, the American people are once again foregrounded but now portrayed as a weak-willed and inert mass (*The Last Argument of Kings*). This shift suggests a broader re-evaluation of the internal cohesion of elements such as the state, the president, and the people in the construction of the symbolic Other. However, it should be noted that the criticism of the American people and the state system in the 1980s differs significantly from the approach of the 1960s or 1970s. The inability

of the American people to fight inevitably means the end of the pan-Slavic ambitions of the USSR to serve as a global leader. Researchers have noted a pattern in the stereotyping of artistic solutions and the stagnation of propaganda techniques, not only in Soviet screen culture of the 1980s but also in the cinematic output of the broader socialist bloc [10]. It is thus unsurprising

that, on the eve of the collapse of the USSR, the unfilmed adaptation of *Hello, Comrade President!* (1990) relocated the narrative of the novel *Seven Days in May* to Soviet soil. At the same time, the authors unambiguously state the unviability of the state system of their own country: the conflict between civilian and military forces leads to mass unrest and numerous casualties.

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