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AMERICAN NEOCOLONIALISM ON THE SOVIET CINEMA SCREEN (BASED ON FILMS ABOUT LATIN AMERICA)¹

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Abstract. Introduction. The scientific relevance of the topic is due to the fact that the concepts of colonialism and neocolonialism are currently becoming part of the official Russian political discourse. The article examines how film representations of the struggle against American neocolonialism in Latin America are used to create the image of the American enemy in the context of the Cold War, which determines the novelty of this work. *Methods and materials.* The article is based on Soviet features and documentary films about Latin America. *Analysis and results.* The author comes to the following conclusions: images of neocolonial exploitation of Latin America contributed to the creation of the image of the American enemy, endowing it with such features as immorality, greed, cruelty, and contempt for the population of the Third World. In addition, the images of Latin America and the struggle of its population against neocolonialism were used in the politics of Soviet identity. A demonstration of solidarity with the people of Latin America maintained the image of the USSR as the leader of the liberation struggle against (neo)colonialism. The struggle against pro-American governments in Latin America acquired legitimacy through images of the plight of the countries ruled by powers accomplishing American neocolonialism. Films about the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutions served to predict victory over neocolonialism in the region in particular and the American enemy in the Cold War in general.

Key words: neocolonialism, Cold War, image of the enemy, Soviet cinematography, Latin America, U.S. foreign policy in Latin America.

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АМЕРИКАНСКИЙ НЕОКОЛОНИАЛИЗМ НА СОВЕТСКОМ ЭКРАНЕ (НА МАТЕРИАЛЕ КИНОФИЛЬМОВ О ЛАТИНСКОЙ АМЕРИКЕ)¹

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Аннотация. Актуальность темы обусловлена тем, что в настоящее время понятия колониализма и неоколониализма возвращаются в официальный российский политический дискурс. В статье исследовано, как кинорепрезентации борьбы против американского неоколониализма в Латинской Америке используются в конструировании образа американского врага в контексте холодной войны, что определяет новизну настоящей работы. Материалами послужили советские художественные и документальные кинофильмы о Латинской Америке. Автор приходит к следующим выводам. Образы неоколониальной эксплуатации Латинской Америки вносили вклад в создание образа американского врага, способствуя наделению его такими чертами, как аморальность, алчность, жестокость, презрение к населению третьего мира. Кроме того, образы Латинской Америки и борьбы ее народов против неоколониализма использовались в политике советской идентичности: демонстрация солидарности с народами Латинской Америки поддерживала образ СССР как

лидера освободительной борьбы против (нео)колониализма. Образы бедственного положения стран, в которых все еще остаются у власти силы, идентифицируемые как приспешники американского неоколониализма, легитимировали борьбу против проамериканских правительств в Латинской Америке. Кинофильмы о кубинской и никарагуанской революциях выполняли функции предсказания победы над неоколониализмом в регионе в частности и американским врагом в холодной войне в целом.

Ключевые слова: неоколониализм, холодная война, образ врага, советский кинематограф, Латинская Америка, внешняя политика США в Латинской Америке.

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Introduction. The concepts of colonialism and neocolonialism are currently returning to the official Russian political discourse. For example, the struggle against neocolonialism became one of the topics of the Second Russia-Africa Summit [31], held in St. Petersburg in July 2023. The fight against neocolonialism is used to legitimize contemporary Russian foreign policy. This rhetoric actualizes the study of Soviet works that used the discourse of the struggle against neocolonialism.

Various aspects of neocolonialism were studied by Soviet researchers: economic [3], military [1], ideological [27], as well as neocolonialism in different regions of the world, including Latin America, and its means and methods [3; 11]. Modern Russian researchers also studied neocolonialism, including the Soviet historiography of this issue [2].

The Cold War cinema was also the research subject of Russian and foreign scholars [4; 7; 26], including the film images of Latin American countries [12]. At the same time, the topic of the representation of American neocolonialism in Soviet cinema has not been comprehensively studied, which determines the scientific novelty of this work.

Two primary research questions drive the article. The first one explores the representation of American neocolonial foreign policy in Soviet cinema. The second one examines how Soviet cinematography employed images from the Third World, particularly Latin America, to construct the image of the American enemy.

This study is chronologically limited to the period of the Cold War. The sources for the study were Soviet feature films and documentaries about the countries of Latin America. It was Latin America that the USSR considered the main

object of American neocolonialism (e.g., [3]). The context of the Cold War determined the close interest of Soviet filmmakers in the region bordering the United States, which was seen as the main enemy of the USSR in terms of ideological confrontation. The processes taking place there (the growth of the activity of partisan groups and left-wing social movements, the Cuban Revolution, the electoral successes of the leftists in Chile, etc.) gave reason to call Latin America the “Burning Continent.” Well-known Soviet film directors such as Roman Karmen, Mikhail Kalatozov, Vytautas Žalakevičius, and Grigori Koltunov joined the work on films about Latin America.

Methods and materials. During the Cold War, cinematography became one of the main means of communication on the cultural front. The effectiveness of filmmaking as a way of persuasion is determined because it combines three propaganda tools: narrative, image, and sound [25, p. 31]. Cold War cinematography was used to explain and justify the domestic and foreign policies of the two superpowers. In a state of bipolar confrontation on the international stage, characterized by a division into “us” and “them,” this involved creating the image of an enemy, which became the most important function of Soviet cinema.

Analyzing the phenomenon of the enemy image, researchers identify such functions as strengthening the collective identity, political mobilization, legitimation of power, legitimation of violence, and prediction of victory [25, pp. 13-16].

The function of strengthening the collective identity is realized through the representation of the enemy as someone different from “us.” The strengthening of the collective identity occurs through the essentialization of the differences

between “us” and “them.” Mobilization based on the enemy image occurs out of fear of that enemy. The enemy is represented as devoid of any moral restraints, striving to realize its goals through total war. The function of legitimizing power and maintaining order is ensured by representing it as the only possible defense against the enemy. The function of legitimizing violence involves the rationale for the use of violence to fight the enemy and is therefore inextricably linked to the description of violence and cruelty committed by the enemy. The function of predicting victory is realized by depicting the enemy as doomed to defeat [25, pp. 13-16].

The countries of the Third World occupied a special place in the history of the Cold War. Besides the fact that an armed confrontation between the two superpowers took place on their territories, Odd Arne Westad notes that they were also the arena of ideological confrontation. In addition, the methods used by the superpowers in the Third World to ensure their dominance were similar to those used by the European colonial powers and consisted of the creation of projects that managed the modernization processes to ensure the development of the Third World countries in a certain direction. The competition of various modernization projects in the Third World has generally played a negative role in the history of developing countries as it has provoked conflicts [33].

American neocolonialism in the Soviet ideology. The struggle against the colonial exploitation of nations throughout the world was an important element in the positioning of the USSR in the international arena. The foreign policy of the USSR in the 1960s consisted, firstly, of all of the support of national liberation movements in the colonies and, secondly, of the condemnation of the colonial policy of the European states. The USSR was one of the initiators of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (1960). In the Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) adopted in 1961, great attention was paid to national liberation movements. The document welcomed the liberation of nations from colonial dependence. It was seen as a factor deepening the crisis of world capitalism.

The young independent states, as emphasized in the CPSU program, were still the object of economic exploitation. These countries

would be able to solve the accumulated problems and contradictions by embarking on the path of building socialism, and the countries of the socialist community were ready to provide them with full support. The program declared the willingness of the USSR to cooperate with the states liberated from colonial exploitation: “The CPSU considers it its international duty to help the nations on the path of winning and strengthening national independence, all the nations fighting for the complete destruction of the colonial system” [22]. At the same time, the program noted that despite the collapse of the colonial system, colonialism had not yet become a thing of the past: “The main bulwark of modern colonialism is the imperialism of the United States of America” [22].

As the former colonies gained independence, an important direction in USSR foreign policy became support for the new young states and condemnation of military aggression against them by the United States. These themes were consistently present in the foreign policy discourse. The aggressive nature of American imperialism was revealed in the speeches of Soviet leaders at party congresses: “There are no such crimes that the imperialists would not commit in their attempt to maintain or restore their domination over the peoples of the former colonies or other countries, breaking free from the clutches of capitalist exploitation” [18, p. 16]. In 1966, at the First Solidarity Conference of Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in Havana, the speech of the Soviet delegation identified “imperialist aggression and colonialism” as enemies [6, p. 159].

The fight against American neocolonialism is also mentioned in the 1986 program of the CPSU. The new version of the program of the CPSU stated: “Even the countries that have long won national independence, such as the states of Latin America, are forced to fight against the dominance of the monopolies of the United States and other imperialist powers” [23].

The theme of the fight against neocolonialism remained significant in the period of Perestroika. For example, the fight against neocolonialism and imperialist exploitation of developing countries is mentioned in the speech by Mikhail Gorbachev at the 27th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and in the resolution of the Congress on the political report of the Central Committee of the CPSU [19, p. 10].

Much attention to colonialism and neocolonialism was paid in Soviet scholarly literature. Neocolonialism was understood as “a system of various forms and methods used by imperialism to keep the liberated countries in a subordinate position” [5, p. 103]. The main types of neocolonialism identified by Soviet researchers were economic, foreign policy, ideological, and military ones [11, pp. 3-4].

The collapse of the colonial system and the formation of the Soviet Bloc led to a change in the methods used by the West to keep the former colonies in the sphere of its influence. Military force was the main instrument for colonial domination, while for post-colonial domination, those were economic instruments such as the export of private capital, economic assistance, trade preferences, and scientific and technical assistance. If the European powers were the main subjects of colonialism, then the United States would become the key subject of neocolonialism. Despite these differences, the goal of colonialism and neocolonialism from the point of view of Soviet researchers was the same: to keep developing countries in a dependent condition [27, p. 4].

In describing the evolution of American neocolonialism, Aleksandr Baichorov comes to the conclusion that various American administrations have used different ideological grounds to legitimize American neocolonial policy. At the beginning of the Cold War, the legitimization of neocolonial policy was attributed to the need to fight against the “Soviet threat.” Under President Jimmy Carter, the United States adopted the doctrine of human rights, and the alleged lack of respect for human rights was used as a rationale for economic and political pressure on developing countries. Under Ronald Reagan, the doctrine of “international terrorism” was used as a justification for intervention in Third World countries, as the USA claimed socialist and national liberation movements as “terrorists” [1, pp. 4-5].

Soviet researchers also studied American neocolonialism in Latin America. As Liubov Chernorutskaja emphasizes, it was foreign economic expansion that played the primary role “in all the variety of forms and methods of spreading imperialism in Latin American countries” [3, p. 3]. The economic goals of American colonialism were to maximize the profits of the American monopolies operating in the

region. The plundering of Latin American resources by American monopolies was considered the main reason for the economic underdevelopment of the region [3, p. 4].

Economic aid as an instrument of U.S. neocolonial expansion was also used in Latin America. First of all, in the form of the Alliance for Progress plan proposed under President John F. Kennedy in 1961. Soviet scholars believed that the main goal of this plan was to prevent socialist revolutions in Latin American countries, the fear of which appeared after the Cuban Revolution. The promise of prosperity through the implementation of the Alliance for Progress plan was intended to reduce the degree of public discontent in the region. The proposition that the fight against Communist expansion was one of the main goals of the Alliance for Progress is also confirmed in official US documents [30].

Politically, neocolonialism manifested itself in the intention to prevent the political independence of the Latin American states: “American imperialism is trying to use the Latin American countries as pawns in its global policy” [11, p. 5].

The military neocolonialism of the United States was manifested in the activities of American intelligence services and law enforcement agencies in Latin America, their organization of military coups, support for dictatorial regimes, the construction of military bases, the activities of international institutions, conducting covert operations of various kinds, sending military advisers to the region, the use of mercenaries, the training of the Latin American military in the United States (“The School of the Americas”), and the elimination of progressive and patriotic movements. As an example of military neocolonialism, many Soviet works considered a military coup in Chile, in which the decisive role was assigned to the monopoly capital of the United States and the CIA [1; 3; 11; etc.].

Soviet researchers described the ideological neocolonialism of the United States in Latin America, which functioned with the implementation of anticommunism. Indoctrination was conducted with the help of the educational system and propaganda of the “American way of life” in the media [27, p. 135].

It should be noted that in the papers dealing with American neocolonialism, Soviet researchers

consistently stated the crisis of American neocolonial policy in Latin America [11, p. 6] and predicted the imminent collapse of the capitalist system [1, p. 137; 27, pp. 251-252]. The idea of the inevitable collapse of capitalism was an important part of Marxism-Leninism as a state ideology in the USSR.

These most important ideological postulates were reflected in various forms of mass culture, including caricatures, posters, mass songs, and journalism. The cinema also played an important role.

American neocolonialism in Soviet films about Latin America. Colonialism has been a target of criticism since the creation of Soviet cinematography. Such works as *China in Flames* (*Kitay v Ogne*, directed by Zenon Komissarenko, Yuri Merkulov, and Nikolai Khodataev, 1925) and *The Adventures of the Little Chinese* (*Priklyucheniya Kitaychat*, directed by Mariya Benderskaya, 1928) touch upon the themes of the plundering of China's national wealth by Western powers and the deportation of Chinese children [28, p. 324]. The 1932 film by Ivan Ivanov-Vano and Leonid Amalrik was an adaptation of the renowned poem *Black and White* by Vladimir Mayakovsky, which tackled the plunder of Latin America. However, the most active development of the Latin American theme in the Soviet cinema of the Cold War was only after the Cuban Revolution in 1953–1959. Further considerations include the image of the American enemy that was formed in Soviet films about Latin America and the purpose of the images of American neocolonialism.

The function of strengthening the collective identity in Soviet cinematography about Latin America was realized through the formation of a positive image of “us” (the USSR, the countries of the Soviet Bloc, socialist parties and movements) and a negative image of “them” (American neocolonialism and its henchmen, including neo-fascists, financial oligarchy, clergy, monopolists, and reactionary military). Thus, the film *Blazing Continent* (directed by R. Karmen, 1972) forms the “struggle for justice” narrative, which brings into line such events and processes as the Battle of Moscow, the Cuban Revolution, the Spanish Civil War, and the Vietnam War. Thus, the USSR is positioned as the world leader in the fight for a more just social order and

progress, against the forces of reaction and fascism [9].

Blazing Continent is a two-part documentary film by the legendary Soviet cinematographer Roman Karmen. A significant part of the film is devoted to Chile, where Popular Unity was in power at the time. The filmmakers drew parallels between Spanish colonialism and modern American neocolonialism (“dollar conquistadors” [9]), which, unlike its predecessor, was destroying not through murder but through poverty. The opposition of the two poles of the Cold War was portrayed as “we help, they rob and kill”.

The focus on the enemy's negative qualities contributed to the formation of a negative identity. In the films about the Cold War, “enemy number one” was often attributed to immorality, greed, cruelty, and cynicism: traits that the Soviet citizen was supposed to avoid, traits that were antithetical to the exemplary “Sovietness.” For instance, the feature film *That Sweet Word: Liberty!* (directed by V. Žalakevičius, 1973) emphasizes the immorality of the military, the backbone of the U.S.-backed dictatorial regime: “The lieutenant has been selling stolen cars and drugs from the cradle!” [34].

The immorality of the American enemy was the theme of the feature film *I Am Cuba* (directed by M. Kalatozov, 1964), where Americans were shown as brothel visitors: “Everything is decent in Cuba if there were dollars!” [8]. The plot of the first novel of the film is based on the analogy between the exploitation of Cuba by the colonialists and the exploitation of Cuban women by the Americans [13, pp. 36-37].

The immorality of the American enemy was also emphasized in another feature film, *On the Pomegranate Islands* (directed by Tamara Lisitsian, 1981). The movie describes the methods used by the CIA. Conspiracies, blackmail, lies, military aggression, political assassinations, staged disasters – this is not a full list of the means by which the CIA sought to carry out a military coup in the fictional Latin American country of the Pomegranate Islands. Journalists acted as henchmen for American agents. “What are you talking with them about? They will kill their own father if they are allowed to be the first to send news about this to their filthy newspapers” [17] – this was the characteristic of the moral qualities

of American journalists who decided to make a false statement to the press for their own benefit.

At the same time, there was a place in the Soviet film narrative for positive images of Americans who were the opponents of the policy pursued by the U.S. ruling circles in Latin America, such as, for example, an honest journalist (the character played by Kirill Lavrov in *On the Pomegranate Islands*). The movie *Blazing Continent* also shows the image of a “good” American: it is the American communist John Reed. The announcer mentions that he is buried in Red Square. Thus, not all the Americans were portrayed as enemies. Soviet cinematography embodied “two Americas” that coexist: progressive and reactionary.

The negative image of American businessmen in Soviet cinema was based on the demonstration of their hypertrophied greed. They were ready to destroy everything on their way in order to find oil in Latin America. The personification of greed and cynicism in the above-mentioned film *Blazing Continent* was Nelson Rockefeller, “a man whose name in Latin America has become a symbol of robbery” [9]. In turn, the film accuses American politicians of hypocrisy: declaring the unity of the nations of America and the equality of the South with its northern neighbor, they condone the collapse of Latin America at the hands of monopolists.

Another negative quality in the film attributed to the colonialists was a contemptuous attitude toward the natives, bordering on racism. As an example of such an invective, one can refer to a story about the Chilean industry: after the nationalization of the country’s copper, the former owners – American monopolists – feared that the “savages” would not be able to manage the complex technological process. “Colonialists are arrogant everywhere and always” [9], the voiceover concludes.

The function of political mobilization in Soviet cinema was realized by justifying the need to protect the nations of Latin America from the threats posed by American neocolonialism, especially their most vulnerable members, women and children. Images of women’s vulnerability in Soviet films about Latin America have already been studied by Russian researchers [13]. This work is therefore focused on the topic of childhood images. These images are associated

with personal experience and a high emotional response, and images of children in danger are perceived as requiring an immediate response. This is the reason for the widespread use of childhood images for political mobilization [24, pp. 420-421].

The film *Blazing Continent* used the images of endangered children to explain the threat posed by American neocolonialism and the urgent measures required to fight it: “Every newborn baby in Latin America already owes at least two hundred dollars to the U.S. monopolies. What for? Many children die before they can pay their debts... Every minute, a child in Latin America dies of malnutrition... Who can stand that?” [9]. After this rhetorical question, the footage of the preparation of an armed uprising is shown, and the viewer has no doubt that such measures are completely justified: “There is the fight for the future of children!” [9].

The function of legitimizing power in Soviet cinematography was realized, in the first place, in the representation of socialist governments in Latin America as fighters against American imperialism. Revolutionary governments were portrayed as the only defenders of the country and the people against American expansion, whether it was military or economic, and as fighters for the liberation of their people from neocolonial exploitation. Only new revolutionary governments can ensure the victory over poverty and inequality and guarantee economic prosperity and independent development. The film *Blazing Island* (directed by R. Karmen, 1961) about revolutionary Cuba shows that even before the end of the revolution, the solution to social problems began: equal rights for men and women, peasants getting access to land, and children getting education [10].

Secondly, Soviet cinematography portrayed the opposition to socialist governments as accomplices of an external enemy, traitors to national interests and the people. For example, the children’s feature film *Black Seagull* (directed by G. Koltunov, 1962) tells about the activities of counter-revolutionaries in Cuba who dream of restoring the old order on the island. No doubt, in order to achieve their goals, they had to collude with the Yankees [15].

In films about the capitalist countries of Latin America, the rulers themselves were portrayed

as dependent figures and American puppets. Such images served the function of delegitimizing their power and legitimizing the subsequent revolution. In the film *Nicaragua: The Collapse of the Dictatorship* (directed by Tamara Lavrova, 1979), the U.S. Marines had a hand in the installation of the Somoza clan dictator [16]. In the documentary *Nicaragua: The Determination to Win* (directed by Genrietta Vizitei, 1983), the presidency of Anastasio Somoza II was likened to a natural disaster: “Can anything be compared to such a tragedy? Maybe! (a close-up of the president’s smiling face). More terrible than an earthquake, more terrible than fires and epidemics was this man for the Nicaraguan people!” [32]. The viewer is, of course, reminded that such a disaster befell the Nicaraguan people precisely at the command of Washington.

In the film *On the Pomegranate Islands*, the opponents of the communist government of the fictional Republic of the Pomegranate Islands were separatist forces who were trained on the military bases of “one great power,” which can be easily recognized as the United States. To emphasize the lack of subjectivity of the local separatists, their leaders are not even introduced in the film. American advisers (“private individuals fighting against communism”) did not hesitate to call them “savages” [17]. According to the storyline, the CIA directly exercised all control over the military coup, and even Western journalists did not believe in the popular character of the separatist uprising.

Soviet cinematography also criticized such a method of American neocolonialism as aid to developing countries. The film *Blazing Continent* characterizes the Alliance for Progress as follows: “Quite tempting promises instead of bayonets... a policy of good neighborliness, assistance, partnership... many believed that the Alliance for Progress could really change the economy of Latin America... ten years have already passed since the Alliance for Progress program was proclaimed – ten years... these are our days” [9]. Images depicting dilapidated shacks, impoverished peasants, children wearing rags, and women collecting sea shells for food accompanied the text. It becomes clear that the program failed and the progress did not affect the countries of Latin America. Such criticism sought to disavow the U.S. efforts to create a positive image in Latin America

and was ultimately aimed at delegitimizing American dominance on the continent.

Regarding the function of legitimizing violence, it should be emphasized that many revolutionary organizations in Latin America, which the USSR welcomed, used armed methods of political struggle: hostage-taking, kidnapping, sabotage, and assassination of political figures. In order to justify the necessity of using violent methods, Soviet cinematography first of all showed the desperate situation of the populations of the Latin American countries that were still under the yoke of American imperialism. The enemy, with whom the Latin American guerrillas fought, whether it was regular armies or paramilitary formations acting on the orders of the American masters, is waging a merciless war against the entire nation. The only way to resist it is, therefore, to take up arms. For example, the film *Neocolonialism is the Enemy of Nations* (Boris Pugachev, 1984) shows photographs that depict “the deeds of the colonialists of the 20th century”: “fascist coup in Chile” and “thousands of victims of the bloody Salvadoran regime” [21]. In the documentary *Nicaragua: The Determination to Win*, the civil war in Nicaragua was presented as a struggle against “the terrorists who had made their way from Honduras” and were sponsored by American neocolonialism [32]. The film also mentions the cruelty of “enemy number one”: “American soldiers were only brave against civilians, going into battle against unarmed peasants, against old men or women... they resembled predators breaking free from a cage” [32], a quote by a participant in the civil war in Nicaragua from that movie.

Secondly, the political violence used by “ours” was legitimized by its limited nature: violence is used only against the military and only in self-defense; “ours” do not attack women, children, or the elderly. The film’s commentary on the Sandinistas’ siege of the Nicaraguan parliament states that all the female hostages were released before the end of the operation [16].

The function of predicting the victory over the American enemy was present in the Soviet films about the revolutions in Cuba, Chile, and Nicaragua. The events in these countries were interpreted as the important stages on the road to the complete victory of the world socialist system:

“As after the triumph of the revolution in Cuba, millions of people on the planet praised the people of Nicaragua and the fighters of the Sandinista National Liberation Front... the victory of the Nicaraguan patriots was regarded as a blow to American imperialism, as a contribution to the world revolutionary process” [16]. These victories were of great importance because the United States has traditionally viewed Latin America as a zone of its exclusive influence [29].

However, even during periods of defeat for left-wing governments in developing countries, Soviet cinematography sought to emphasize the inevitability of the final victory over imperialism and reactionary forces, despite some temporary difficulties. The film *His Name is Lucho* (directed by Inna Kmit, 1974) [14] was made at the most difficult time for the left-wing movement in Chile (1974) and ends with an optimistic quote from Leonid Brezhnev: “As to Latin America, we firmly believe that its historical prospects are inseparable from the development of the whole of mankind – these are prospects for freedom, independence and social progress” [20].

Thus, Soviet cinematography represented the political and economic processes in Latin America as a struggle against American neocolonialism. Filmmakers used the images of the struggle against neocolonialism in Latin America to create the common perception of the American enemy: cruel and ruthless toward the weak, without moral restrictions, contemptuous of the nations of the exploited continent.

Conclusion. In Soviet cinematography, both documentaries and feature films represented the U.S. foreign policy in Latin America as neocolonialism in its various forms: military, foreign policy, economic, and ideological. The activities of the American monopolies, the Alliance for Progress program, economic aid, covert operations of the special services, and military coups were assessed equally negatively in the Soviet cinema. Regardless of U.S. foreign policy, Soviet cinema concentrated on demonstrating its negative consequences during the Cold War. American businessmen, politicians, and military men (subjects of neocolonialism) in the Soviet films about Latin America were shown as greedy, immoral, and cruel exploiters who despised the “savages.” At the same time, there was a place in the Soviet film narrative for positive images of

Americans who refused to support U.S. policies in the region.

The images of Latin America and its people’s struggle against neocolonialism served the following functions in Soviet cinema: first, they were used in the politics of Soviet identity – the demonstration of solidarity with the peoples of Latin America supported the image of the USSR as the leader of the anti-(neo)colonial struggles all over the world; secondly, the images of the exploitation of the peoples of Latin America by American neocolonialism were used for political mobilization, substantiating the need for Soviet aid to developing countries, especially those where revolutionary governments had already been established; thirdly, the demonstration of the plight of the population of Latin countries in which the remaining power was identified as henchmen of American neocolonialism, legitimized the struggle including the military one against pro-American governments; fourthly, the victories of political parties advocating socio-economic reforms were interpreted in the Soviet cinema as steps toward the victory of the world socialist system, so the images of the revolutions in Cuba and Nicaragua served as a prediction of victory over American neocolonialism in the region in particular and the American enemy in the Cold War as a whole.

NOTE

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