

REFERENCE

For

The academic and educational degree "Doctor" in History
Human Sciences, professional field
2.2 History and Archaeology
Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"
Faculty of History
Department of Modern and Contemporary History

of Magdalena Danielova Vlastanova

Dissertation Topic:

AMERICAN AND BRITISH
ANTI-SOVIET CINEMA PROPAGANDA
(1961–1968)

by Prof. Dr. Darina Grigorova Grigorova

The topic of the image of the enemy in propaganda is an important part of Cold War studies, in which cinema is the revered art of creating a specific stereotype of the other side. Anti-Soviet cinematic propaganda in the US and Britain has a variety of themes, the key ones of which are explored and analysed in Magdalena Vlastanova's dissertation.

The chronological frame 1961-1968 was chosen by the author according to the historical logic of the American Democratic presidential administration (John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson), to which Magdalena Vlastanova also subordinates the chronology of cinematic logic of her exposition.

However, the 1961-1968 borders have another, ideological logic, that of the Cold War, namely 1961 with the construction of the Berlin Wall, and 1968 with the Prague Spring.

The dissertation has a total volume of 289 pages, structured in three chapters. The literature used includes 102 titles in Bulgarian and English with annexes: tables and synopses of films, which are the main source for the development of the dissertation topic.

Chapter One: *American Anti-Soviet Cinema Propaganda: Preconditions for its Formation and Mechanisms for its Implementation* begins with "Foreign Policy Preconditions - Inspiration of the Cinema Industry," which provides a quick overview of U.S. military strategy after the loss of the nuclear monopoly. A separate paragraph analyses the 'Berlin Question' as a catalyst for ideological confrontation between the two blocs. The Caribbean crisis is also dotted through the psychological impact of the fear of nuclear war and its reflection in American propaganda. A paragraph is also devoted to the "second wave of red scare," McCarthyism, on the one hand, and the Beat generation anti-war, protest counterculture in American society. The social propaganda towards "baby boomers" as a cinema audience through family cinema is examined in detail against the institutional history of Hollywood. The analysis of American film productions and their anti-Soviet messages begins in the fourth paragraph / from p. 76/. Magdalena Vlastanova's goal of linking American foreign and domestic policy to Hollywood's anti-Soviet propaganda is fulfilled.

Chapter Two: *British Anti-Soviet Cinema Propaganda: Preconditions for its Formation and Mechanisms for its Implementation* retains the approach of Chapter One with an overview of the foreign policy preconditions for British anti-Soviet propaganda, followed by the domestic political background. Labour's electoral rhetoric is analysed, noting the differences between American and British policy towards the Eastern bloc. The domestic political analysis of social and educational problems in Britain is too detailed and goes beyond the main source of the dissertation, the cinema, which is only dealt with in the third paragraph /of p. 128/ through legislative policy for the film industry. The analysis of the different portrayals of James Bond in American and British cinema is interesting, as is the spy theme in anti-Soviet British propaganda.

Chapter Three: *Nuclear Danger and Anti-Soviet Propaganda in American and British Films, 1961-1968* analyses the 'atomic cinema' subordinated to the 'bomb culture'. The overview of American nuclear policy is long on the subject of this dissertation and short on this serious problem. The substantive analysis of American cinema begins in paragraph 2.4 /of p. 175/.

A recommendation to the author is to supplement his study with the view of Soviet and Russian authors who have written about the Soviet image in American and British cinema, such as Kartseva, E.N., Ryabov, O.V.

CONCLUSION

The dissertation of Magdalena Danielova Vlastanova meets all the requirements for a PhD thesis in the field 2.2. History and Archaeology. I recommend to the esteemed scientific JURY to vote Magdalena Danielova Vlastanova the educational and scientific degree "DOCTOR" in History.

Sofia, December 2, 2024

JURY MEMBER:

Prof. Dr. Darina Grigorova