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The Struggle on the Screen: Cinema and the Cold War

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCF - Congress for Cultural Freedom
CIA – Central Intelligence Agency
ECA - Economic Cooperation Administration
ERP - European Recovery Program
FBI - Federal Bureau of Investigation
FRG - Federal Republic of Germany
GDR - German Democratic Republic
MAD - Mutual Assured Destruction Theory
MGM - Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
MI6 - British Secret Service
MPEA - Motion Picture Export Association
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NRRP - National Recovery and Resilience Plan
PCA - Production Code Administration
RKO -Radio Pictures Inc.
SED - Socialist Unity Party of Germany
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA – United States of America
US – United States
USIS - United States Information Service
USSR – Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics
VOKS - All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries
WWII – Second World War

INTRODUCTION

Images define human beings. Throughout history, visual representations, such as paintings and theater plays, have always influenced people's perception about themselves and life in general. Already in ancient Greece, the philosopher Aristotle attributed to Greek tragedy the power to purify audiences from emotions of pity and fear. Through the definition of the concept of "*catharsis*", he argued that tragedy had a genuinely positive social function on Greek audiences by purging their souls from negative emotions. This final work connects with this idea that politics, the public thing, and art are intertwined.

By examining more recent history, the invention of cinema directly stemmed from this ancient idea of influencing people's minds through forms of art and entertainment. More precisely, this final work will analyze the role of cinema in the creation and unfolding of the Cold War between the United States of America (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Accordingly, it will be argued that one of the most relevant grounds on which such an historic conflict was fought was the one of culture. As a result, many historians have started to address the Cold War as the "Cultural Cold War". Following this line of thought, the research question of this final work is to understand how, and to what degree, culture has been able to create, define, and influence the Cold War in its entirety. Many aspects of culture will be taken into consideration, such as art, architecture, theater plays, music, and movies. In particular, the role of cinema will be analyzed more in depth through a comparative analysis of American and Soviet movies, which will provide the reader with the best possible visual representations of different Cold War eras. Movies will indeed be used as the primary source of information and, through an accurate analysis of their content, it will be demonstrated the tight connection that existed between them and political ideas during the Cold War. In order to show the massive influence that culture had, through its various forms of art, in creating and shaping the conflict itself, the chapters will be structured in the following way.

In chapter one, the general role of culture during the Cold War will be analyzed. In stark contrast with traditional study approaches to the Cold War, which have usually examined this event through the classic fields of international relations, high politics and diplomacy, it will be shown that the Cold War can be more efficiently and clearly be grasped as a cultural phenomenon. More precisely, the analysis will revolve around the idea that the Cold War can

better be explained by framing it in a cultural dimension. The vast propaganda warfare that interoccurred between the US and the USSR is the primary analytical starting point. In such a *Kulturkampf*, propaganda and culture were synergistically intertwined between each other's and the purpose of this first chapter will be to demonstrate such a connection.

The first part of the chapter will explain why there has been such a cultural twist in the studies of the Cold War and why it is meaningful to study it under this innovative light. After establishing such relevance and consistency of the cultural dimension of the Cold War, the chapter will proceed by providing three practical examples in which culture had a massive propagandistic role in influencing people's opinions.

The first example deals with the movie programme sustained by the Marshall Plan and the instrumental role these movies had in recreating a sense of European identity among Europeans at the end of Second World War (WWII). Actually, from a socio-political point of view it was deemed absolutely important to reconstruct a sense of European identity among Europeans if the Marshall Plan was to be successful on an economic level as well.

The second example provided deals with the massive impact American music had in Western Germany at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. More clearly, jazz and rock'n'roll had the power to break obsolete social norms by which younger generations no longer felt represented and helped young people in finding new identities in new social models, far from the traditional conservatism of the Weimar era.

If the first two examples were about the influence exerted by the American government on the European communities, especially in Western Germany, the third and last example provided is related to the tremendous pressure put by the Soviet government on East Germany and Poland at the end of WWII. In fact, the Soviet regime wisely adopted architecture as a mean of propaganda to disseminate communist ideals in the Eastern part of Europe and neighboring countries. More precisely, the Kremlin was convinced that through the reconstruction of post-war Warsaw and East Berlin following the stylistic precepts of socialist realism, the validity of the Soviet-socialist economic model could be proven and demonstrated to the people of Eastern Europe.

After having established the tight connection that existed between culture and the Cold War, to the point that many refer to the latter as the Cultural Cold War, the second chapter will continue this cultural analysis by using Cold War movies as the primary source of information. By Cold War movies it is meant all the most relevant movies produced during

the Cold War period by the American and Soviet cinematographic industries. Being the core of this final work, in the second chapter it will be argued that movies are still today among the most valuable sources of knowledge as to understand more comprehensively how the conflict was first created and then propagated by means of propaganda all over the world. Following this line of thought, cinema was among the most powerful weapons to conquer the hearts and minds of people globally during the 20th century. Images, such as the ones produced in movies, were formidable tools to shape the perception, and the profound understanding, of what the Cold War actually was. Being indisputably fundamental to win the Cold War struggle, both American and Soviet politicians and public opinion makers understood it was essential to influence the filmmaking process of their respective countries. Furthermore, due to the fact that cinema was also a highly lucrative sector, it rapidly became another Cold War battleground. Following this logic, movies became one of the most effective means through which it was possible to clarify the nature, or even create from scratch, what so far had been perceived as a rather abstract, obscure, and unclear conflict. In a nutshell, cinema had the power to reify the existence of the Cold War to the eyes of the general public.

The third and last chapter focuses on the massive influence Cold War movies had on the American cinematic productions of the post-Cold War period. In particular, it will be argued that, since during the Cold War every cultural aspect of American society was severely contaminated by the conflict itself, the end of it had a serious influence on how movies were made in the post-Cold War period. After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there was a significant change in the popular culture of American society and foreign policy. By always using movies as the main instrument of analysis, it will be shown how post-Cold War movies reflected these mutations in American society and how, at the same time, these movies were massively influenced by the Cold War cultural heritage. For instance, the primary movies' function to instrumentally create the perception of an external threat, against which it was possible to reassure American national identity, basically remained the same. In this sense, through the analysis of highly successful Superhero movies (such as Superman and Batman) and Spy movies (such as James Bond and Jason Bourne), it will be argued that the Cold War never ended from a cinematic point of view. More precisely, if the Cold War had a massive influence on how American movies were made, in what they

meant, and eventually how the general public interpreted them, the absence of such an epochal conflict must have had an equivalent, if not greater, impact.

The first part of the chapter will revolve around the shift in American ideology in relation to the presence of external threats. If during the Cold War public fears and paranoia were embodied by communism, in the post-Cold War period such vacuum was eventually occupied by international terrorism. Once again, following traditional Cold War rhetoric, identity was created against the presence of a common enemy.

The second section will proceed by examining the evolution of some superhero franchises, such as Superman and Batman, in order to show how common notions of good and evil mutated in the post-Cold War period.

The final part of the chapter will follow the same logic of the previous section on superhero movies but it will instead focus on the evolution of the spy genre. More precisely, the main differences between Cold War and post-Cold War movies will be synthesized in a comparative analysis of two of the most iconic American spy heroes, i.e. James Bond and Jason Bourne. If the first is the visual incarnation of the most classic Cold War values, the latter instead perfectly encapsulates all the new paranoia coming from a more complex and insecure post-Cold War world.

CHAPTER ONE

The Cultural Cold War

“The most effective kind of propaganda is defined as the kind where the subject moves in the direction you desire for reasons which he believes to be his own.”¹

From a traditional point of view, historians have mainly approached the study of the Cold War through the fields of diplomacy, international relations, and high politics. It is clear that plenty of studies tend to explain the Cold War within the more traditional cadres of economics and politics, stressing the role of the military apparatuses and diplomatic issues. However, when the Berlin wall fell, some archives with propaganda documents were discovered in Eastern Europe and the USA, a fact that utterly revolutionized classic interpretations of this conflict and various approaches to it. More precisely, the new dimension that has sparked renewed interest in understanding the Cold War is its propaganda warfare perpetuated through the vast realm of culture.

The psychological warfare carried by the USA and the USSR against each other has resulted in a real Kulturkampf. Through these innovative studies, the emphasis on analyzing patterns used by Cold War scholars has framed the war much more from an ideological and cultural perspective. Which role did propaganda, mass media, and more in general culture have in constructing and developing the Cold War? The purpose of this chapter will be to provide an answer to this question by framing the Cold War in its cultural dimension.

After briefly explaining why it is relevant to study the Cold War from a cultural perspective, the chapter will begin with a deeper analysis of the role of culture in this conflict. In order to sustain this thesis, three practical examples will be presented of different types of cultural influence used by the USA and the USSR during the first stages of the conflict. The first relates to the movie programme supported by the Marshall Plan and how these movies were instrumental in recreating a sense of identity among Europeans. It will be argued that the construction of an European identity among European citizens was the first brick on which to lay the future economic success of the Marshall Plan.

¹ Saunders F., *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, (1999).

The second example provided concerns about the significant impact American music, namely jazz and rock'n'roll, had among Western Germans during the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Through music, younger generations could identify themselves and break the chains of traditional conservatism dating as long as the Weimar era.

Finally, if these two first examples deal with different types of American propaganda weapons used to influence Europeans, especially West Germans, the third and last example deals with the cultural pressure put by the Soviet regime on East Germany and Poland. More precisely, this last example explains architecture's power on a propagandistic level to convince people of the soundness of the Soviet-socialist economic model. In this optic, the reconstruction of post-war Warsaw and East Berlin according to the dogmas of socialist-realism art was a planned strategy utilized by the Soviet regime to preserve and protract itself through the years.

Why this turn to the cultural dimensions of the Cold War?

As said before, in the 1980s, there was a real "cultural" twist in Cold War studies due to the aforementioned discovery of many archives, which focused on the range and scope of this conflict's cultural dimension. For this reason, it would be more correct to refer to it as the "cultural Cold War". Many historians have indeed pointed to the fact that the Cold War has been pivotal in the constituency of the cultures of many nations involved in the conflict itself. In addition, there are three main reasons to study the Cold War through its cultural component. The first has to do with the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) and how the latter has been able to conduct a propaganda war both nationally and internationally.² Since it is undisputable that any war is fought, at least in part, through the use of words or images, the role of propaganda has been central in the Cold War. After the Second World War ended, the construction of images and the spread of propagandistic messages has been a central pillar to the forty years of conflict fought between the Eastern and the Western blocks. In this regard, the American government strategically created a secret cultural propaganda plan and assigned conspicuous financial resources to it. The pivotal role in this programme, secretly directed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), was assigned to the CCF. This vast organization could count on offices in more than thirty countries, and, among its many and very different activities, it was responsible for the publication of famous magazines, the

² Lasch C., *The Agony of the American Left*, (1973), pag. 64 – 111.

creation of different art exhibitions, and the organization of different international meetings. The primary role of the CCF was to use and promote those artists that would influence the public opinion of Western European citizens to foster the American way of life at the expense of Marxism and Communism. It was virtually impossible not to be touched by any Cold War publicity during that period, as information and entertainment had been spreading thanks to the new mass media of satellite television massively. In this context, any topic, stretching from sports to music or space travel, was charged with political meaning and could be used as propaganda to shape public opinion in one's favour. Following this, the American government was able through the creation of the CCF to build a consortium, which was mainly composed of a network of intelligence staff and political scientists of the Ivy League universities, with the objectives of subverting communist societies and of fostering American interests abroad against the menace posed by the Soviet Union. Many people, through different phases, worked for the CCF to promote the so-called *pax americana*, which would have eventually marked the American Century. All these objectives were realized by this American spying establishment, which could work in the shadow and be undetected for over twenty years. Through the creation of a cultural front in the Western part of Europe, whose main concern was freedom of expression, the battle of the Cold War was defined as the struggle for men's minds. In this struggle, traditional military artillery such as bullets and bombs were substituted by much more powerful weapons: words, journals, art exhibitions, ballets, theatre plays, books, movies, concerts, and awards. To conclude, individuals and institutions working for the CCF had to accomplish their mission of conducting an efficient propaganda war against Soviet Russia by first understanding the term "propaganda". According to a National Security Council Directive of 1950, propaganda was defined as "*any organized effort or movement to disseminate information or a particular doctrine by means of news, special arguments or appeals designed to influence the thoughts and actions of any given group*".³ Furthermore, it was specified that a vital element to be considered was the one of "*psychological warfare*", defined as "*the planned use by a nation propaganda and activities other than combat which communicate*

³ Saunders F., *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, (200), pag. 2 – 3. More precisely, this definition of propaganda can be found in the National Security Council Directive, the tenth of July 1950, quoted in the *Final Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities* (1976).

*ideas and information intended to influence the opinions, attitudes, emotions and behaviour of foreign groups in ways that will support the achievement of national aims".*⁴

The second reason why it is relevant to turn on the cultural side of the Cold War regards a question that scholar John Lewis Gaddis has posed. To him, framing the Cold War as a culture war was the most efficient way to answer a simple yet eye-opening question: what did ordinary people actually think during the Cold War?⁵ Providing an answer to such a question would have opened a much broader array of interpretations and understandings of what the Cold War really meant for the people who lived through it.

The third reason, instead of why it is relevant to turn to the cultural side of the Cold War, is related to a tradition of political scholars which has provided much of its historical interpretations on culturally based explanations rooted in the ideas of Montesquieu and Tocqueville.⁶ It is possible to see their influence in the studies of the Cold War as formulated by the scholar Samuel Huntington, whose central idea of the "*clash of civilizations*" mainly explained that "*the great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural*".⁷ According to Tony Shaw, following this line of thought, "*in the battle for mass opinion in the Cold War, few weapons were more powerful than the cinema*".⁸ The second chapter of this final work will be structured around this idea, and the role of movies during the Cold War will be analyzed more in-depth. In particular, a comparative analysis between Soviet and American cinema will be conducted to understand the main ideological differences between these countries in different phases of the Cold War.

Another important scholar that has highlighted the relevance of cultural studies in the explanation of the Cold War is Marcel Cornis Pope. According to him, the literary innovations in post-modern novels were simply a reflection of the new post-Cold War order, which was no longer characterized by a bipolar power system. The cultural response to such

⁴ Ibidem.

⁵ Gaddis J., *On starting all over again: a naïve approach to the study of the Cold War*, in Westad O., *Reviewing the Cold War. Approaches, Interpretations, Theory*, (2000), pag. 36.

⁶ More precisely, in 1835, Tocqueville predicted that America and Russia were "*destined by some secret providential design to hold in their hands the fate of half the world at some date in the future*". Such an idea was quoted multiple times during the Cold War. See De Tocqueville A., *Democracy in America*, (2003), pag. 484 - 485.

⁷ Huntington S., *The clash of civilizations*, (1993), pag. 22.

⁸ Shaw T., *Hollywood's Cold War*, (2007), pag. 1.

a new geopolitical scenario marked a "*shift from a critique of the grand narratives of the Cold War to the mediation of heterogeneous interests*".⁹

However, after having established the main reasons why scholars have decided to approach Cold War studies from a cultural perspective, it is crucial to distinguish between the meaning of "cultural Cold War" and "Cold War culture". Even though they might seem the same, the two denote entirely different concepts. The former refers to the different methods through which high and popular cultures were created, promulgated, and eventually interpreted by the people; the latter focuses more on the different types of attitudes and thought patterns adopted by the public about the Cold War. This final work has much more to deal with the first than the second. In this regard, it will be exhausting to quote the work of the scholar David Caute. He has produced a thorough analysis of the role of art as a whole – i.e. movies, ballets, music, theatre, painting, and sculpture – during the Cold War. He has argued that the term culture refers to "*a quest for high achievement and perfection; as a corpus of ongoing intellectual and imaginative work; as a social way of life reflected in art, learning, institutions, and manners; and the training, development, and refinement of mind, tastes and manner*".¹⁰

After acknowledging the power of culture, its definitions, and its relevance on an international level, it must be noted that its role in the USA and in the USSR differed substantially. In Soviet history, the leader of the Bolsheviks, Vladimir Lenin, had already understood the important link between culture and politics in 1917. He was well aware that communism's success was tied to its ability to develop the masses' ideology culturally. Already in that period, artists of any sort – i.e. writers, painters, musicians - and scientists were active promoters of patriotic principles and proletarian internationalism. As early as 1921, Lenin and the Bolsheviks understood the vast international reach of cinema in terms of propaganda, and they knew it could foster soviet diplomatic interests against capitalism. Later on, with the creation of Cominform (the Communist Information Bureau) in 1947 and Agitprop (the department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Communist Party Central Committee), the propaganda techniques became increasingly more structured and articulated. According to some data, the Soviet government was spending around the

⁹ Cornis-Pope M., *Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting in the Cold War Era and After*, (2001), pag. 39.

¹⁰ Caute D., *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*, (2003), pag. 621.

equivalent of two billion dollars on Communist propaganda globally by 1960.¹¹ Generally speaking, in the conception of Soviet culture, one of the key concepts that contributed to the making of socialism was socialist realism. Socialist realism was the primary function or purpose to be promulgated through propaganda, which eventually defined its aesthetics and working methods. On the other hand, American cultural response to Soviet propaganda laid in the definition of the Marshall Plan. According to Senator William Benton, apart from the economic assistance to reconstruction of Europe, "*a Marshall Plan in the field of ideas*" recognizing that "*the heart of the present conflict is a struggle for the minds and loyalties of mankind*" was vitally necessary to win the conflict.¹² As already said, following the chapter, a specific section will be devoted to the Marshall Plan's massive role in the Cold War's cultural struggle. In conclusion, the clash between American and Soviet cultures could be summarized as one between "*classicism and modernism; realism and abstraction... a series of civil wars within agreed territory*".¹³

The Role of Culture in the Cold War

It can be argued that, on the one hand, the Cold War between the Western block and the Soviet Union was a traditional political-military conflict between empires; on the other hand, it also was a cultural and ideological confrontation on a global scale with no precedent in history. In this latter sense, one of the most characteristic features of the Cold War was its focus on ideology. According to Huntington, neither the Soviet Union nor the United States was "*a nation-state in the classical European sense because each defined its identity in terms of ideology*".¹⁴ Another exciting way to grasp the importance of such an ideological aspect of the Cold War was to understand why the Cold War ended. In this sense, many historians have been asking themselves the same question regarding the end of the Cold War. More precisely, was it only an economic deficiency that eventually led the USSR to its definitive loss in the Cold War? For instance, a difficulty to compete with American technology in a world that has increasingly grown more dependent on chips and hardware. Were the Soviet unbearable expenses for the military budget another explaining factor which made the "giant with clay

¹¹ Taylor P., *Munitions of the Mind: A history of propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Day*, (1995), pag. 256.

¹² Hixson W., *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture and the Cold War*, (1998), pag. 15.

¹³ Cauter D., *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*, (2003), pag. 4.

¹⁴ Huntington S., *The Clash of Civilizations?*, (1993), pag. 23.

feet” fall¹⁵ Although these could seem, and partially are, all relevant and effective explanations factors, this final work will instead argue that the fatal shot that doomed Soviet communism was one of a moral, cultural, and intellectual nature rather than a merely political, economic, and technological one. Before its dismantling, the last ruler of the SU, Gorbachev, had perceived the relevance of culture and indeed, the policies he started, i.e. glasnost and perestroika, were cultural. It was unfortunately too late to save the Soviet Union as it was back at the end of the 1980s. In contrast with what has been argued by Hobsbawm, who has stressed the economic deficiencies, the incapacity to produce a hi-tech economy and to support the role of a superpower, it will be argued that the Soviet Union collapsed onto itself because people of Eastern Europe had long been calling for human rights - such freedom of the press, of speech, of assembly and association – without being heard.¹⁶ Suppose this second position has to be taken for true. In that case, it can be argued that the cultural, ideological and moral driving causes for Soviet Union's final collapse had already been present since 1945. Accordingly, even though Russians had the possibility of producing millions of books; cultivating an impressive scientific industry; subsidizing wonderful ballets; winning international chess tournaments; being the first to send a human being into space; and winning Nobel prizes, yet Russians had been losing the so-called kulturkampf right from the beginning as they were afraid of basic freedoms. As a result, the American government, through its main agents like the CIA and the State Department, set as targets of their initial cultural Cold War campaign, not the almost inaccessible USSR but rather the broader cultures of Western Europe, in which communist parties and pro-Soviet Union sentiments were strong. Apart from traditional weapons industrially produced, sculptures, paintings, classical music, movies, theatre, jazz, rock, national exhibitions, ballets, and even chess, became increasingly used. However, even though the means through which the Cold War was fought were similar, the context of the Soviet Union and the USA were utterly different from a cultural point of view. Both capitalist democracies and communist states felt an urgency to prove their virtue by showing the entire world their superiority on a spiritual level. Both ideological empires, as Huntington would say, were keen to obtain public support in

¹⁵ According to Eric Hobsbawm, the USA spent around 7% of its Gross Domestic Output (GDP) on military expenses, while the Soviet Union spent around 25% of it, which implied an unsustainable cost which eventually led the SU to its final demise. See Hobsbawm E., *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914 – 1991*, (1995), pag. 247.

¹⁶ Ibid., pag. 117.

each and any event of the Cultural Olympics and, as a result, claim the high ground of progress.

Another interesting point to note about the Cold War is that it is a unicum in history between the US and the USSR, as there has never been something like this before. Even though there had been the jihads, the crusades, and the Thirty Years War, all of these conflicts were characterized by an armed invasion. In stark contrast, during the roughly 45 years of the Cold War, the two superpowers seldom had a direct military confrontation. After the war between the years 1939 till 1945, the victors conducted a war which was entirely of a cultural and ideological nature. It is in this latter sense that this war had no precedent. When Catholics fought Protestants or Muslims, when a revolutionary France challenged a conservative Britain, in none of these cases, actors, painters, composers, poets and chess players were deployed as a weapon to culturally conquer the enemy. However, the critical factor that allowed this kind of confrontation to exist was the advent of the new mass media. The general public that resulted from this creation became a characterizing feature of the 20th century, during which the masses became a protagonist. Even though Bonaparte's revolution could be categorized as a cultural war, the absence of such a grand public was the missing piece in this first ideological warfare between France, England, and the rest of Europe in general. The Cold War had the merit of uniting art to power by using instruments of promotion and, at the same time, when needed, censorship. Once again, in such an exceptionally unique cultural warfare, books, paintings, sculptures, newspapers, and later televisions took the place of bombs, rockets and bullets.

At the beginning of the Cold War, right after the end of WWII, Soviet culture was heavily influenced by authoritarian and centralized principles stemming from the Bolsheviks' heritage. In particular, a prominent figure in the Soviet cultural panorama was Andrei Aleksandrovich Zhdanov, who had previously led the resistance in Leningrad against the Nazi siege. Zhdanov was a fine politician and an authentic cultural ideologist. In this sense, he wisely exploited the *Kul'tura I Zhizn'* newspaper to export his ideas about the post-war world vision. All his ideas about the Soviet crusades and, above all, a strong sentiment of Russian chauvinism characterized so deeply the Cold War rhetoric from 1946 to 1949, that many historians have defined this period as *Zhdanovshchina*. In a nutshell, the Soviet regime promulgated moral values that were all very conservative. In general, the tendency was to portray its enemy, the USA, as a place of illiteracy, full of uncultured people led only by ephemeral capitalist feelings. In stark opposition to this low-level culture, Soviet history was

instead characterized by virtues of classicism. More precisely, from Marx and Engels to Lenin and Stalin, Soviet culture was intrinsically classical and considered itself to be the historical continuation of the Greek drama and the Italian Renaissance. Diametrically opposed to this deep adoration of classical arts, there was a profound hate towards the modernist avant-garde, which was collecting great consent in America. However, Soviet artists, especially during Stalin's reign, were subjected to an outstanding level of censorship and were strictly guided on what to say or not to say. They were praised more for their accusations against the various forms of decadent American art rather than for their artistic merits. Russian critics fiercely criticized the stream of consciousness and the theatre of the Absurd, labelling these as manifestations of bourgeois decadence. Nevertheless, who was setting the esthetic canons to follow and through which an art form was to be considered more artistic than another? The answer is simple, and it was the Party. The latter was setting the rules and establishing the cultural taboos. The main directives were to ban any form of pessimism and sadness from cultural representations. In brief, culture had to promote optimism and bright feelings of fraternity.

The US, instead, was taking a completely different path, and, from a cultural standpoint, it was promoting forms of avant-garde arts, such as abstract expressionism and modernism. Paintings were full of colours and free of any canon to respect, novels were giving much attention to the inner life of their protagonists, buildings were built with innovative techniques, and in general, aesthetic values of art were stripped of any social utility or any programmatic aspect. Although much of the Western public needed help understanding the true meaning of such art forms, the avant-garde movement became the spiritual guidance of politics. Soviet Russia never accepted avant-garde as a cultural idol to aspire to since a political dictatorship would have never been able to authorize the spread of an innovative artistic movement that promoted honest freedom. In their struggle against capitalist imperialism, Soviet leaders banned modernists' works from museum pavilions.

The necessity to institutionalize such a cultural war against Soviet propaganda was embodied by the Smith-Mundt Act of June 1942. The Act, i.e. Public Law 402, was voted favourably by the House of Representatives to secure bipartisan approval against the more traditional republican sentiments, which embraced a more isolationist stance. The bill finally passed the Senate a year later in 1948, strongly supported by the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and finally signed by US president Truman with the Information and

Educational Exchange Act. The main objective of this law was to promote the use of any media weapon – movies, radio programs, newspapers, theatrical exhibitions – to foster a positive image of the United States abroad, especially in Western Europe. Other significant supporters of this law were the Secretary of State George C. Marshall, the Chief of Staff Dwight H. Eisenhower, the Secretary of Commerce Averell Harriman, and the American ambassador in Moscow, Walter Bedell Smith. Another major part of the Act related to the creation of the United States Information Service (USIS) with the primary goal of developing a vigorous and effective ideological campaign to export American moral values, interests, and virtues to the rest of the world.¹⁷ It is important to stress that the greater part of cultural programs was outside the direction of the USIS, as they were instead being handled by the State Department, which had a specific Division of Cultural Relations instituted in 1938.

The uprising wars increased the urgency to invest in these new media channels to establish American values globally. Mainly the Korean War contributed to augmenting American expenditures in the sector of entertainment and propaganda, having as the main targets of these investments the radio, the movies, and televisions. However, even though there have been different proxy wars directly connected with the Cold War, the hottest battlefield was the one in Europe, particularly in divided Germany. Americans were very present on German soil, having radio broadcasts streaming from the four most important German cities: Stuttgart, Munich, Bremen, and Frankfurt. Around three times a day, the program Voice of America would offer its listeners a direct link from New York. In the words of Wagnleitner, "*America became in the German language a sort of metaphor for a Disneyland territory lying outside history*".¹⁸

However, not only Germany but also France and Italy were the target of a well-structured plan of cultural influence and propaganda. In this sense, the USA invaded and bombarded Europe with plenty of cultural content, such as commercially produced films and newspapers. The next section will deepen this aspect of cultural invasion through the creation of the Marshall Plan. In particular, it will be analyzed how American propaganda strategists have specifically devised the latter to re-create a sense of the Western European

¹⁷ More precisely, the USIS was "*an information service to disseminate abroad information about the United States, its people, and policies promulgated by the Congress, the President, the Secretary of State and other responsible officials of Government having to do with matters affecting foreign affairs*". Link with the full text at: <https://www.usagm.gov/who-we-are/oversight/legislation/smith-mundt/>

¹⁸ Wagnleitner R., *The Irony of American Culture Abroad: Austria and the Cold War*, (1989), pag. 291.

Community. The focus will be narrowly directed towards selecting some movies produced by the Marshall Plan, which had the sole goal of reconstructing the identity of European citizens.

The Construction of West European Identity through Marshall Plan Movies

The Marshall Plan was announced by the former US army's wartime Chief of Staff and, at the time, the new Truman's Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, in his famous speech on the fifth of June 1947 at Harvard University, with the official name of European Recovery Program (ERP). This plan was devised to deal with the great crisis of post-war Europe and eventually became the best foreign aid plan ever created. Ideologically, Truman's Doctrine was supposed to be spread abroad, through which the US president warned against potential communist threats in Europe, especially in Greece.¹⁹ In response to the Marshall Plan, in which theoretically even the Soviet Union was invited to participate, the Soviets refused any aid from the US, claiming that the Marshall's proposal was only an American stratagem to interfere with the internal affairs of other states. However, such a political move did not produce many surprises, as the plan was structured so as to be rejected by the Soviets. As later claimed by Dennis Fitzgerald, one of the Marshall Plan devisers, the plan “*far from envisioning cooperation with the Soviet Union, it was devised within the framework of a Cold War ethos which sought to drive a wedge between Moscow and its client regimes... It was implicit all along that it was important that we did not give the Communists the opportunity to stick their oar into these places*”.²⁰ The real intent of the Marshall Plan, far from being purely altruistic, was to strengthen the economies of Western European countries to make them future members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and valuable allies in the Cold War efforts.

¹⁹ More precisely, the President stated: “*At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority. The second is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms. I believe that it must be the policy of the U.S. to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjection by armed minorities or by outside pressure. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way*”. Full script of the speech available at: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/truman-doctrine>

²⁰ Saunders F., *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, (200), pag. 16.

However, what made the Marshall Plan so successful? First of all, there was an incredible expenditure for an unprecedented propaganda campaign. Both the USA and the receiving Western European countries put in motion an incredible propaganda machine to increment the cultural battle in the West. As stated in the bilateral treaties signed with the United States, the foreign countries receiving financial aid agreed to *“recognize that it is in their mutual interest that full publicity was to be given to the objectives and progress of the joint programme for European Recovery”*.²¹ Furthermore, it was also acknowledged that *“the wide dissemination of information on the progress of the program is desirable in order to develop the sense of common effort and mutual aid which are essential to the accomplishment of the objectives of the program”*.²² More precisely, the Marshall Plan had four main objectives to attain. The first was to persuade the population of Western European countries of the economic and political validity of the ERP, i.e. to foster political stability through a financially sustained improvement of the economy. The second was to obtain political support on a national level from Congress and, more generally, the American citizens. The third objective had to do with the containment of the Soviet communist menace. The US government was concerned with the attacks from communist propaganda, especially in Europe. In this sense, the goal was to counteract state socialism and tyranny from the Soviet Union with the American values of liberal democracy and capitalism. Finally, the fourth objective of the plan was to make Europe the third global force in the geopolitical scenario by annihilating the desires of the European non-communist left parties.

As part of their propaganda efforts, the USA and the receiving European countries utilized a great range of old and new mass media, such as movies, radio, newspapers, pictures, paintings, and posters, to propagate their interests and values. Only at the end of the 1980s, these types of media sources had largely been neglected in studies related to the Marshall Plan. In particular, movies had been scarcely considered. One of the first to consider the

²¹ First Report to Congress of the Economic Cooperation Administration, Article VII, the thirtieth of June 1948, pag. 216. Link at: https://www.google.it/books/edition/Report_to_Congress_of_the_Economic_Coope/9m0UAAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=inauthor:%22United+States.+Economic+Cooperation+Administration%22&printsec=frontcover

²² Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776 – 1949, compiled under the direction of Charles I. Bevans, Assistant Legal Adviser, Department of State, released in October 1970, pag. 685. Link at: <https://books.google.it/books?id=gOExAAAAIAAJ&pg=RA40-PA8&lpg=RA40-PA8&dq>

importance of the Marshall Plan film programme was Albert Hemsing, a former administrative member of the Marshall Plan itself.²³ It is surprising how much the role of these moving images has been downplayed in the understanding of the Cold War, as they offer a vital and original insight into the secret diplomatic strategies of the US towards Europe after the end of the Second World War and the consequential European integration process. As a matter of fact, European cooperation was seen as a key step for the American reconstruction plans for Europe. The American governmental apparatus wisely understood that, since the European economies were so intertwined among each other and interdependent, it was fundamental for the success of the ERP to establish an efficient intra-European economic cooperation. How was it possible then to persuade Europeans that economic cooperation was indeed the right path to follow? In a nutshell, the persuading message that had to be passed to Europeans was that there was no real alternative to European cooperation. Posters were among the most traditional means of communication used by the American government to pass this message. They were optimal for repeating over and over this concept. Accordingly, in 1950 it was announced a poster competition with the theme: "Intra-European Cooperation for a Better Standard of Living". All over Europe, artists were called to devise posters that would promote the idea of Western Europe cohesion, for instance,, by removing trade barriers and creating inter-governmental institutions to foster commercial exchanges. Eventually, more than 10 thousand posters were submitted from all European countries.

²³ Hemsing A., *The Marshall Plan's European Film Unit, 1948–1955: a memoir and filmography*, in the Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television, (2006). Hemsing deepens the vital relationship between the Marshall Plan and movies in this paper. Link at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439689400260201>



Figure 1: This poster was the winner of the 25 final posters selected by a distinguished intra-European jury. The winning design, "All Our Colours to the Mast", depicted one Europe ship with its sails made of flags from each country. (Source: <https://www.marshallfoundation.org/articles-and-features/marshall-plan-poster-contest/>)

As shown in figure 1, the prizewinning designs, which were eventually attached all over Europe, focused on the benefits of cooperation and the prosperity stemming from it. However, it would be a rather limited vision to only consider the economic side of the cooperation. More precisely, the broader result of economic cooperation would lead to a stable political climate. On the whole, the main message spread was that a new Europe was about to come to life, a different one compared to the war-torn Europe of the past. In this sense, European cooperation meant a peaceful Europe where European citizens could feel safe and European rights to freedom be safely protected. The Marshall Plan's triad peace-prosperity-freedom eventually shaped a new phase of European history, far from wars and devastation.

Apart from posters though, other media were used to explain the advantages and disadvantages, if they ever existed, of European cooperation and to create a further sense of identity for Europeans themselves. A wide variety of moving images produced by the

Marshall Plan film programme was fundamental to this process. A central matter to the Marshall Plan's film unit, located in Paris, was creating a feeling of European unity. For this reason, most of these movies focused, first of all, entirely on the issue of European unity and, secondly on the beneficial aspects of European cooperation from an economic standpoint.

Following this reasoning, the first one worth mentioning is the animated movie *The Shoemaker and the Hatter*, produced in 1950 by the Economic Cooperation Administration (ECA) and shown in eleven different languages throughout Western Europe to endorse the extensive benefits of the Marshall Plan. This movie tells the story of two neighbours, a shoemaker and a hatter, who embody two divergent visions on how to arrange businesses at the war's end. On the one hand, the hatter prefers to limit his production of hats and raise prices, aided by a tariff barrier. On the other hand, the shoemaker believes in the mass production of shoes and in keeping prices low to favour export in a commercial environment with no trade barriers. After demonstrating that free trade is synonymous with prosperity, this latter approach eventually proves to be successful. However, even the hatter enjoys the fruits of prosperity at the end of the movie. Even though he loses his job in the shoe business, the prosperity brought by free trade creates so many new jobs that he is able to find a new one in the transportation sector.

It is clear from this first movie that since the ERP was mainly an aid package focused on economic resources, most of these movies were centred on economic issues. This is not to say that the only reasons why Europe should have been more united were merely economic. From the American perspective, Europe also had to be united on a political level. More precisely, the increasingly pressing presence of the SU in Eastern Europe and the communist ideological precepts, which were gradually infiltrating into the West, became a great concern to the American government. The Soviets were seen and perceived as a real menace to the free world as a whole and, more in particular, to the democracies of Western Europe. In this sense, people had to be alerted about this incoming threat posed by communism. The need for a dramatization of such a red menace from Eastern Europe was to be found in the 1951 movie *Without Fear*, financed by a British production. In this movie, the danger of communism is visualized by using powerful images such as “*a tide of technicolour red engulfing all Europe*”.²⁴ As shown in the movie, if Europe was willing to survive the communist threat, it

²⁴ Schulberg S., *Selling Democracy: Films of the Marshall Plan: 1948 – 1953*, (2005), pag. 56.

had to unite not only from an economic point of view but also from a political one. According to the movie's plot, a decent standard of living is necessary for freedom and unity to exist. What was the first step to achieving such unity at a European level? It was believed that the best answer was to persuade the people of the different European states to develop a feeling of some European identity. This issue was at the centre of the movie *The Hour of Choice*, which was produced as well in Great Britain back in 1951. The movie's beginning is centred on a retrospective analysis of the complex conformation of Europe. Accordingly, even though European states do share a common cultural heritage, it is shown how there have always been divisions by frontiers. In the movie, it is claimed that throughout different decades there have always been frontiers to mark the differences in geography and race among different Europeans. In this complex analysis, Europeans have been friends, partners, allies and, simultaneously, rivals, strangers, and antagonists throughout different phases of history. However, the answer that the movie provides to this issue of division is simple yet complex. Accordingly, it is stated there could be unity in such differences, a winning formula that has eventually helped Europeans to cover the conflicts among themselves through history, a testimony of great civilization. Even Churchill, during his famous Zurich speech of 1946, acknowledged that the secret to recreate the post-war social order was European unity. As he argued, it was mandatory to *"build a kind of United States of Europe. If Europe were once united ... there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and the glory in which its three or four hundred million people would enjoy... let Europe arise"*.²⁵ In this dialectic of unity, no other idea proved more appealing to the Western media than Churchill's division of Europe through the presence of the "iron curtain", beyond which the Soviet bloc contained by coercion a tremendous amount of people. In this sense, the movie further explains that Europe instead had already made significant steps in the unification of the continent thanks to the Schuman Plan and the Council of Europe. The beginning of an economic recovery was also a fundamental step for a more united Europe. In the film, Europeans are praised for their intelligence in putting aside their differences, allowing the economy to restart. Their devotion to a greater and common good produced astonishing success. However, a significant part of the merit is given to the United States and the Marshall Plan. The combination of European ideas with American might in industrial production has been the key factor for Europe to

²⁵ Full text available at: https://www.churchill-in-zurich.ch/site/assets/files/1807/rede_winston_churchill_englisch.pdf

rise from its ruins to a new life. In this visual representation, European unity was a vital factor in keeping the continent alive, but it was not sufficient. It is argued that a successful European recovery could only be achieved through the creation of a trans-Atlantic pact. Following this reasoning, after WWII ended, Europe had to deal with the fact that it was no longer the centre of the world. The treaty is explained to be fundamental for the protection of the free world in general, and Europe's economic contribution to it was vital for an efficient defence from eastern attacks.

Another critical issue in pursuing European unity and cooperation during the Cold War was how to cope with the German reconstruction problem. The American government well understood how vital it was to revitalize the German economy. There was no doubt that Germany's full recovery was vital for European recovery. However, when the Second World War ended, whole Europe was mad at Germany's actions, and most Europeans had to be convinced whether or not it was right to provide part of the Marshall Plan's funds to Germany. The movie *The Marshall Plan at Work in Western Germany* had precisely this task. The film framed the issue of West Germany reconstruction in a larger European context, highlighting how interdependent German and European economies were. Even today, Germany's industrial capacity remains a vital asset to European economic prosperity. As stated during the movie, the nations of Europe needed Germany's production as never before since "*the wheels of Europe are still closely geared to the wheels of German industry... (and) the recovery of Europe must surely lag and falter until these German factories are in full production once again*".²⁶ However, the economic recovery of West Germany was not presented as a goal in itself but more as a necessary step to the broader goal of European reconstruction. This perspective was the only viable path to convince Europeans to economically support a country responsible for the war and the economic chaos that followed. It was not a coincidence that the focus was primarily on economic causes and, instead, no consideration was given to the political dimension. The stringent economic situation of Europe made it imperative to prevail on past political antagonism between European nation-states.

Another argument American propaganda used to stress even more the importance for European cooperation was related to the history of the US itself. In the animated cartoon *Tom Schuler – Cobbler Statesman*, the protagonist, the fictional Tom Schuler, emigrates to

²⁶ Bischof G., Pelinka A., Stiefel D., *The Marshall Plan in Austria*, in *Contemporary Austrian Studies*, Vol. 8, (2000), pag. 224.

America during the formative period of this country. He was a young shoemaker in an American colony, and he was having trouble in making business through the different colonies, which would later become the United States. After a life-changing trip to Philadelphia, where Tom could learn about the Constitutional Convention, he understood that the American constitution could have only been realized through diplomatic compromise. He then decided to undertake a political career and eventually became a convention member, charged with ratifying the constitution in his home colony. As a result of the ratification, economic and political life began to prosper thanks to the removal of previous borders and hostilities that separated each colony. In a nutshell, free trade and political compromise between former colonies led to economic prosperity. The movie's intent was very clear in that Europe could emulate the American model to resolve its post-war disorders.

References to the history of the United States as a model to be followed by Europe were increasingly presented in movies also by showing the incredible American way of life, which was characterized by the highest living standards one could imagine. Following this logic, the key to American success was its productivity. The fruits of high rates of productivity were shown to Europeans by the Marshall Plan administration in order to convince them to turn their economies into mass production. Movies such as *Productivity: Key to Plenty* and *Productivity: Key to Progress* all contributed to showing American economic prosperity, framing it in a historical context. The key message of these movies was that “*you too can be like us!*”²⁷ Once again, these movies had the single objective to stress the benefits of the Marshall Plan funds and the resulting unification of Europe.

In conclusion, Marshall Plan-funded movies were essential to create a sense of unity among European citizens, the first step to boosting economic prosperity in a continent that had been torn apart by the war. Yet cultural divisions were still too marked and present to be overcome just with a few movies. More precisely, the dangers of communism and a Europe torn between an East and West were posing a significant threat to European unification. Such a divide in the European continent, both the cause and the result of the Cold War

²⁷ Ellwood D., *The Message of the Marshall Plan*, in “Selling Democracy: Friendly Persuasion”, (2006), pag. 7. Link at:

https://www.dhm.de/assets/Zeughauskino/Download/Zeughauskino_online/21_Die_Filme_des_Marshall-Plans/Selling_Democracy_Friendly_Persuasion_2006.pdf

confrontation, was a seemingly unsurmountable problem that required much more than some funds of the ERP. In the next section, another important example will be provided of the power of culture in influencing public opinion. In particular, it will be analyzed the role American music played in shaping the ideas of the younger generations of West Germany a few years later, the end of WWII.

The Influence of American Popular Music in a West Germany Torn Between Weimar Conservatism and Cold War Liberalism

On the other side of the curtain, the Soviets responded to US propaganda no less vigorously. In a radio broadcast from Moscow in 1953, Los Angeles was depicted as full of smog and misery, while New York was full of homeless people. The most important organization for cultural activities was the VOKS (i.e. the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries). It had to respond to the orders of the Council of Ministers, and it was in charge of cultural exchanges in relation to cinema, art, music, theatre, ballet, sport, and the academic disciplines. However, it is clear that VOKS did not work only as an intergovernmental travel organization, but it also supported and subsidized foreign societies that offered hospitality to Russian delegations, even ones involved in interfering actions in the domestic affairs of a Western European country. Notwithstanding this climate of tension, on January 1958, the first bilateral cultural treaty was signed between the US and the USSR. It included all exchanges of artists, academics, students, musicians, writers, theatre, and ballet companies.²⁸ Such an agreement was vital to accelerate artistic exchanges between the two countries, leading to the dual national exhibitions one year later in 1959. However, the agreement was only a façade of tranquility as tensions between the American and the Soviet

²⁸ The Lacy-Zarubin Agreement, known as the agreement between the US and the USSR on Exchanges in Cultural, Technical, and Educational Fields, was a bilateral accord between the United States and the Soviet Union on various fields, including movie, ballet, music, tourism, technology, science, medicine, and academic research exchange. It was signed on the twenty-seventh of January 1958 in Washington, D.C., and negotiated between William S.B. Lacy, Special Assistant to the President of the United States for East-West Trade and Georgy Nikolayevich Zarubin, Soviet Ambassador to the United States. It was renegotiated every two years, and during détente, the duration was extended to three years. The ultimate agreement was signed by Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev at the 1985 Geneva summit, and the agreement remained in force until the Soviet collapse. Source: Gould-Davies N., *The Logic of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy*, in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 27, No. 2, (2003), pag. 206.

cultural fronts had been growing at the end of the 1950s. In a column of the New York Herald Tribune of the thirtieth of June 1958, entitled “Sweetness and lies”, according to the journalist who wrote it, Roscoe Drummond, the cultural relationship between these two empires had been so far a one-sided affair.²⁹ More precisely, he argued that the Soviets were exploiting the agreement to spread their culture as much as they could, yet without letting American culture enter their borders. According to him, “*what Moscow wants is to shield Soviet people from American views and to have Soviet officials free to spread sweetness and lies in the United States*”.³⁰ Furthermore, with the beginning of the Vietnam War in 1965, all visits from Soviet artists to the USA, and vice versa, were virtually frozen. Eventually, most Soviet-American relations ended.

However, by returning to Drummond's argument, why was Russia trying so hard to keep American culture out of its borders? What American values frightened Soviet officials so much? A potential answer to these questions could be provided by the practical example of West Germany during the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. This part of Germany had been profoundly changed due to the infiltration of American popular culture among its population at the end of the war. As a result, it was now torn between more conservative sentiments, rooted in the Weimar Conservatism's tradition, and the more progressive American liberalism.

The cultural invasion from the USA to Germany was initially resisted. According to many German scholars, jazz was seen as the music of nothingness. However, to the German expressionist writer Wolfgang Borchert, jazz could have been the new music through which it was possible to discover a new Germany, freed from the horrors of war.³¹ To him, jazz encouraged spiritual research of what Germanness was and, especially, what it should have been at the end of the Second World War. However, traditionalists and more conservative art critics feared this music since they were keen to recreate Germanness following more traditional values based on nationalist sentiments. To their eyes, jazz was the musical expression of the oncoming Americanization of Europe, the absolute antithesis of every German value. In brief, jazz was considered as an inferior form of art from a cultural point of view. Nevertheless, during the 1950s, the perception of jazz music in West Germany was

²⁹ Cauter D., *The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War*, (2003), pag. 30 – 31.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Müller C., *Jazz and Rock and Halbstarke: American Popular Culture in West Germany between Weimar Conservatism and Cold War Liberalism*, in Devlin J., *War of Words*, (2018), chapter 16.

much different from the one during the Weimar Republic and the Nazi dictatorship. As a matter of fact, during the latter period jazz was considered as the music of black people, while during the 1950s with the creation of less commercial forms of jazz, it was considered an elitist form of art that was detached from the ongoing Americanization of German society. At the same time, more Cold War liberals grew in number compared to the religious conservatives in Western Germany. Eventually, there was a slow but steady, openness to American music and, as a result, a nationally financed jazz salon for the younger generations was opened in West Berlin in 1960.³² It must be noted that this acceptance of jazz music was gradual and partial, and the two different connotations of it, one as the most American form of art and the other as the elitist and anti-American, actually existed side by side and overlapped. On the one hand, the avant-garde left praised it, while conservative anti-Americans sought to eliminate it. Part of the answer to this refusal could have been attributed to a general misconception. From the 1920s to the 1950s, all American popular music was categorized as jazz.³³ Only in the second half of the 1950s, the German public began to distinguish what authentic jazz was as opposed to more popular and commercial forms of American music.³⁴ In order to better grasp what the Weimar interpretation of jazz music was, as a manifestation of American cultural superficiality and nihilism, it is worth mentioning the words of the German journalist Hans Zehrer. In one of his articles, named “Jazz – the black man’s answer: rhythm as the last principle of order”, published in 1952, he stated that: “*around the turn of the century, a number of strange phenomena surfaced. They surfaced from the underground of the suburbs, the fairgrounds [Rummelplätze], the dock areas and the brothels. Not only that: they surfaced from the under-ground of the soul and from the physiological one below the belt, from the unconscious of the individual and from the darkness of the collective soul.... They [the phenomena] have captured the whole world within 50 years and govern her now*”.³⁵ While these words are rather difficult to interpret, the core of his message was that he was afraid of the proletarian cult of this culture.

³² Poiger U., “American Music, Cold War Liberalism, and German Identities”, in *Transactions, Transgressions, Transformations. American Culture in Western Europe and Japan*, (2000), pag. 134.

³³ Poiger U., *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany*, (2000), pag. 137.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pag. 138.

³⁵ Müller C., *West Germans Against the West: Anti-Americanism in Media and Public Opinion in the Federal Republic of Germany 1949 – 1968*, (2010), pag. 115. More precisely, Zehrer had been an eminent member of the conservative revolutionary Tat Circle during the late years of the Weimar Republic. He was a strong supporter of an authoritarian state.

Furthermore, it must be noted that he always wrote about black jazz musicians, as testified by the name of the article, i.e. “the black man's answer”. In his vision, America meant modernity, devoid of real progress. A modernity framed in a world of a superficial culture and a life characterized by mere automation. At the beginning of the Federal Republic, his vision synthesized the conservative opposition that America was the antithesis of Germanness. Although this was the prevailing idea towards jazz, with about enough time this perception began to change. German life started to become increasingly more Americanized, in particular among the younger generations. There was a growing lust for material possessions, and German life was becoming increasingly Americanized. There were many complaints from concerned German parents regarding the cultural corruption their sons received through American jazz and movies.³⁶ For instance, a 1940s popular song about the American Wild West, called “*Don't fence me in*”, became one of the most listened songs of Radio Munich's show “Midnight in Munich”. Hermann Glaser, a famous politically engaged cultural historian, said this radio program was “*one of the hottest broadcasts in Europe*”.³⁷ As already said, some of the German youths of the 1950s started to see jazz more as an expression of counterculture against the American way of life. There was a literally divisive “*Krieg der Zeichen*”, i.e. a war of symbols, among the youngsters of Western Germany during this decade. On the one hand, there were the so-called *Exis* (i.e. the existentialists), who came from the higher strata of society and wanted to distinguish themselves from the working class defined as the *Halbstarcken* (i.e., the young delinquents or the half-strong), which was instead more Americanized. The former preferred cool jazz over rock and roll, which was instead more popular among the *Halbstarcken*. More precisely, “*whereas Dixieland and rock and roll carried, in the eyes of the Exis, the stigma of the “American”, cool jazz signified a “French” and culturally anti-American attitude.*”³⁸ To summarize, the 1950s dichotomy on a cultural level of the German youth was between rock and roll for the working classes and jazz for the more educated. Rock and roll was indeed perceived as a threat to the hegemonically superior cultural societies of Germany. It embodied the symbols of rebellion against traditional norms on sex, authority, and social class divisions. Oddly enough, although there was a high level of general unemployment during the second part of the 1950s, employment among youths was very

³⁶ Müller C., *Jazz and Rock and Halbstarcke: American Popular Culture in West Germany between Weimar Conservatism and Cold War Liberalism*, in Devlin J., *War of Words*, (2018), chapter 16.

³⁷ Glaser H., *Deutsche Kultur 1945–2000*, (1999), pag. 43.

³⁸ Maase K., *Amerikanisierung von unten*, pag. 301.

high in Germany.³⁹ For this reason, it is even more important to understand why Halbstarcken and rock and roll were perceived so much as a threat. From a theoretical point of view, at least during an economically prosperous period, a social revolution should have been highly unlikely to happen. Instead, the conservatives grew increasingly more paranoid about the Halbstarcken generation, as testified by a journal article written by Zehrer. More precisely, he wrote an article in which he drew attention to the dangerous relationship between the rising crime rates from young people and cinema.⁴⁰ In his view, rock and roll and American movies were responsible for instigating violence and for many teenage riots that were taking place at that time all over West Berlin and other German cities.⁴¹ Following this media campaign, American popular culture was considered the leading cause for these episodes of violence and riots, during which concert halls and cinemas were destroyed. According to a report, more than ninety riots were registered in about twenty-eight cities all over Germany, even in some in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), between the years 1956 and 1958.⁴² Such a harsh opposition to rock and roll manifested by the German press was simply a mere manifestation of fear.

In conclusion, it could be argued that even though Halbstarcken was not advocating for socialism, it was still one of the first discontent movements in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). More precisely, they were battling for more tolerant social norms, and they thought rock and roll, and American culture in general, could have been used to express that social wish. As argued by the cultural historian Diethelm Prowe, while the Halbstarcken was using the latest American music “*as a tool for provoking the rage of respected society*”, they were still not “*convincing as carriers of any kind of a democratic working-class culture*”.⁴³

At the moment that the intellectual class of West Germany accepted American jazz, eventually, it was no longer perceived as something quintessentially American to the

³⁹ Chaussy U., *Jugend*, in Benz, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik*, vol. iii, pag. 213.

⁴⁰ Zehrer H., *Ein junger Mann von 19 Jahren. In der Wirklichkeit der Cowboys, Gangster und Dirnen*, in press cutting *Sonntagsblatt*, 4 March 1951.

⁴¹ Poiger U., *Rock'n'Roll, Female Sexuality, and the Cold War Battle over German Identities*, in the *Journal of Modern History* LXVIII, (1996), pag. 587 – 598.

⁴² Speitkamp W., *Jugend in der Neuzeit*, (1998), pag. 257.

⁴³ Prowe D., *The "Miracle" of the Political-Cultural Shift. Democratization between Americanization and Conservative Reintegration*, in Schissler H., *The Miracle Years. A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949 – 1968*, (2001), pag. 453.

perception of West Germans. As soon as jazz became the music of the intellectuals, parallelly to that, it became "Europeanized" in the eyes of the general public. The only way to save the German (and, more in general, European) sense of cultural superiority, America had first to be perceived as inferior. At the moment that jazz had become Europeanized, rock and roll fulfilled that role perfectly. In the pursuit of reconstructing a sense of what Germanness truly was after the disaster of war, America had been exploited by the German media to embody the values of superficiality. As already done in the past, even during WWII, Germany truly found itself and its identity against the United States. In summary, music had the power to construct an identity among young Germans struggling to find a fitting representation against the old models of conservatism. The case of the Halbstarken is a glaring example of how the US efficiently influenced a German generation in finding their true self in something as new and fresh as jazz and rock'n'roll could be at that time. The power of music transcended any barrier and made Germany closer to the American side by conquering the hearts of its future generations, winning an important battle against the Soviets in the Cold War chessboards.

The Influence of Soviet Architecture in the GDR and Stalinist Poland

After analyzing two cases of American cultural propaganda devised to influence public opinion of West Germany through movies and music, it is now the moment to consider Communist propaganda in two satellite states, namely Poland and East Germany. This time the study of how propaganda has been conducted will focus instead on a totally different realm, the one of architecture and urban planning. It could be surprising, but the design of cities and new urban zones constructed for housing purposes were of central importance during Stalin's years to obtain more public support. In this optic, architecture played a central role in a Stalinist propaganda campaign. City planning's main message was a promise of joy to its people, to show them the strength of socialist power from an economic point of view. In addition, designing urban spaces in line with socialist realism principles was an efficient way for the Soviet government to totally rethink the political and cultural identities of the socialist system itself. As a result, to this day, urban development plans of the Stalinist era in Eastern Europe, above all in Poland and the GDR, are among the most impressive ever done globally. These plans mainly involved the reconstruction of many cities that had been destroyed during the Second World War. Furthermore, they also included the construction of entirely new urban buildings, such as Nowa Huta in Poland and Stalinstadt (today

Eisenhüttenstadt) in the GDR. Due to the strong state centralization which characterized socialist states, the construction of capital cities was of uttermost relevance in their propaganda programs. Even though after the war the building policies were still relatively liberal, starting from 1950 when the socialist regimes started to consolidate, in Poland and the GDR respectively, the socialist model eventually permeated all aspects of culture and politics, leaving aside any modernist tendency. From that moment on, any form of art, architecture included, had to follow Stalinist' artistic precepts in accordance with socialist realism. A famous slogan of that time said that any art form had to be “national in form, and socialist in content”.⁴⁴ The campaign for socialist realism in the architectural field, and the fight against modernism, was officially launched in Poland by President Boleslaw Bierut on the third of July 1949. In a scheduled speech to the United Polish Workers' Party, he declared that it was to time to find a “*remedy against the shortcomings of our construction industry, not least in the field of architectural forms. In the forms used up until now, there are still remnants of bourgeois cosmopolitanism. Our architects have to refer more intensively to the sound traditions of our national architecture; they have to adapt to these traditions to new functions and new possibilities and give them a new socialist content*”.⁴⁵ After condemning the culture of modernist functionalism, the President pointed to the new possibilities of reconstructing Warsaw thanks to the advantages of the planned economy created by the new political system. In this typical Stalinist rhetoric, to an allegedly corrupted modernism – as the embodiment of the inhuman American imperialist architecture – it was opposed the magnificent style of socialist architecture.

⁴⁴ Kluczevska K., and Hojjeva N., *Socialist in Form, “National” in Content? Art and Ideology in Soviet Tajikistan*, (2020). This slogan was so famous that many later works were entitled with it, as this famous paper, which analyzes the profound nexus between art and its ideological function in Soviet Socialist Republics.

⁴⁵ Bierut B., *The Six-Year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw*, (1951), pag. 329. Through those years, many speeches were made similar to the one given by Polish President Bierut. His speech was so famous and inspiring to Polish architects that it was published as a political manifesto in the form of the book mentioned above in 1951. The book was also very rich in drawings, depicting Warsaw and what it could have potentially looked like in the future, as represented in figure 2.



Figure 2: a futuristic vision of Marszałkowska Street, Warsaw, in 1955, as portrayed in the book *The Six-Year Plan for the Reconstruction of Warsaw* (1951).

As can be noted in this drawing of 1951, architects were mainly taking inspiration from the classicism period, which was indeed one of the most appreciated styles in the socialist realism environments.

Regarding the GDR, the move towards the socialist realism architectural style came later, when the President of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), Walter Ulbricht, fiercely criticized the new buildings that had been constructed in Berlin. According to him, the new venues and buildings of the city had to be “*beautiful to the eyes of the people*”, and “*the centre of our capital must become a huge place for demonstrations, giving expressions to our nation’s combat readiness and its determination to rebuild the country*”.⁴⁶ Following these directives, the capital Berlin had to be

⁴⁶ Durth W., Düwel J., and Gutschow G., *Architektur und Städtebau der DDR*, vol. ii, pag. 83 – 4. The President used these words during an important conference of the party, held on the twentieth of July 1950.

rebuilt in accordance with the Soviet model. For instance, between the years 1950 and 1951, the Royal Palace of Berlin was destroyed to create space for the central parade ground and also to show how the country was detaching itself from the Prussian past. Furthermore, the *Stalinallee* was built, the first monumental and socialist street with residential purposes, which connected the Friedrichshain district with the city's centre. Such residential buildings or monumental streets were built following the example of Stalinist Moscow, according to the values of socialism. Buildings for the working class were indeed typical in Stalinist countries. Similarly, in Warsaw, a skyscraper named the Palace of Culture and Science was created in the image of towers that had just been recently built in Moscow. An important feature that characterized the reconstruction of Warsaw at the end of WWII was rebuilding the Old Town. This move to reconstruct the historical part of the city was in line with the precepts of socialist realism and its objective of selectively appropriating architectural traditions. In addition, reconstructing the old part of the city was also a brilliant political move. As a result, this was an incredible opportunity for the Soviet regime to present itself as the saviour of national heritage and gain public support from the Polish, essentially an anti-communist population.

Unsurprisingly, the reconstruction programs in both capitals, Berlin and Warsaw, were subsidized by a costly multi-media propaganda campaign. For instance, many different radio programs, movies, and newspapers covered with daily reports the status of the ongoing works of the various construction sites. As shown in Figure 3, the buildings, squares, and streets were soon utilized as political spaces to celebrate national festivities or political events. As a result, posters like this were used to propagate idealized pictures through mass media.



Figure 3: As shown in this poster, the buildings of Stalinallee are visible in the background. The poster is dated 1952 and celebrated the Month of German-Soviet Friendship. (Source: Vorsteher D., *Parteiauftrag: Ein neues Deutschland. Bilder, Rituale und Symbole der frühen DDR*, (2002).

Another critical element that characterized such propaganda campaigns of reconstruction was their strong condemnation of the previous demolition of the cities. For instance, on the one hand, the destruction of Warsaw was presented as a barbaric act by Nazism, a correct interpretation from a historical point of view. On the other hand, its rebuilding was presented as an act of patriotic heroism from all Polish citizens. The official slogan for such a campaign was: "Cały naród buduje swoją, stolicę" which meant that "the whole nation builds its capital". However, the destruction of Berlin was portrayed only as a crime committed by the British and American armies, completely ignoring the key role that the Soviet Red Army had in annihilating the city. Similarly, from a propagandistic point of view, the GDR also downplayed the responsibility it had for the war. According to this vision, the GDR saw itself as utterly innocent and only the imperialist side of Germany, embodied by the Federal Republic, was to be considered responsible for the atrocities of the war. In Berlin and Warsaw, there was an absolute glorification of the reconstruction works as they not only materially symbolized a triumph over the devastations produced by the war and Nazi fascism,

but they also were means of a successful and peaceful overcoming of the evil consequences of Western imperialism.

In a famous Stalin note dated 1952, the Soviet leader expressed an important idea for the propaganda campaign related to the reconstruction of Berlin. Accordingly, he proposed a peace treaty through which it would have been possible to reunite and neutralize Germany.⁴⁷ In order to promote such an idea, if Berlin was really on the verge of becoming the capital of a finally reunited country, it was vital to present the beautiful buildings constructed in Stalinallee. As a result, many posters with idealized images of Stalinallee's palaces were made to conduct such a propaganda campaign of architectural splendour (see figure 3). The message sponsored was relatively straightforward as it meant that if the Allies were to approve Stalin's proposal, all Germans, both from the East and from the West, would have the possibility of finally living in beautiful buildings, such as the ones in Stalinallee, and no longer in those poor American "boxes".⁴⁸ Essential for this reconstruction campaign was the depiction of workers as national heroes. The workers that contributed to this reconstruction phase were idolized as vigorous and determined people. Elevating the condition of the construction workers to the status of heroes was not only in conformity with the spirit of socialism, in which working classes were seen as the protagonists, but it also incentivized people to work unpaid on these construction sites, which otherwise would have been impossible to construct. As a reward for their efforts, workers not only would have been elevated to the status of heroes, but they would have also received one of the apartments they had been building. This programme was again reaffirmed by the mayor of East Berlin, Friedrich Ebert, during his speech in Stalinallee for the May Day Festivities of 1952. Accordingly, he stated that the new luxurious apartments had been built for "*our activists, our best workers, and our work heroes*" and not for the upper class, in stark opposition to standard capitalist practices.⁴⁹ Particular emphasis was also given to the state's active role in this

⁴⁷ Ruggenthaler P., *The 1952 Stalin Note on German Reunification: The Ongoing Debate*, in the *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 13, No. 4, (2011), pag. 172. More precisely, the Stalin Note, also called the March Note, was a political document handed to the representatives of the Western Allies (France, the United Kingdom and the USA) from the USSR. More clearly, Stalin suggested reunifying and neutralizing Germany without conditions on economic policies but with the promise of fundamental human rights, such as democracy, freedom of the press, freedom of speech, religious affiliation, and political association.

⁴⁸ Levith J., *War of Words: Culture and the Mass Media in the Making of the Cold War in Europe*, (2013), chapter 11.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*.

construction process. For instance, photographers used to take many pictures of state politicians while they were involved either in a political speech on a future architectural project or while they were engaged in some physical work. However, most of these images seemed to be staged, designed to convince public opinion that socialist rulers really cared about the people. Furthermore, according to this multi-media propaganda, socialism would provide workers not only with these beautiful apartments but it would have also granted them an entire chain of services, such as the infrastructures and the social facilities surrounding them. The key message behind this propaganda was that happiness would have come thanks to the methodological planning of the national economy under the socialist regime. As always, some blockbuster movies were made between 1952 and 1953 to celebrate the rebuilding of Warsaw. For instance, the movie *Adventure in Mariensztat* (originally *Przygoda na Mariensztacie*), the first full-length colour movie made in Poland, celebrated the new city outlook following the architectural design of socialist realism.⁵⁰

However, this socialist realist style of new constructions, with harmonious and luxurious features, would eventually prove utopian, especially in economic terms. A few years after Stalin's death, building policies were changed entirely in the SU. In order to provide for the housing shortage issue, new buildings had to be built quicker, cheaper, and better. Eastern European countries shortly followed suit. As a result, the new building techniques were cheaper but not necessarily better. These new policies produced desolate prefabricated neighbourhoods, which are considered to this very day the actual image of socialist poverty. This new type of socialist buildings, which basically were housing blocks with a box-like shape, no longer embodied a promise of a happy life but rather a miserable one. The once-upon-a-time rich propaganda on the marvelous promises of a harmonic and happy life under the socialist regime was eventually replaced by the minimal numbers of uniform flats to be constructed.

⁵⁰ Crowley D., *Warsaw*, (2003), pag. 113.

CHAPTER TWO

The Cinematic Cold War

*“Us and Them,
And after all, we’re only ordinary men
Me and You,
God only knows it’s not what we would choose to do...
Haven’t you heard it’s a battle of words?”⁵¹*

In the struggle to influence people's opinions, it is clear that cinema was indeed one of the most powerful weapons. In the 20th century, from the Bolshevik Revolution to the fall of the Berlin Wall, going to movie theatres was one of the most preferred activities for great segments of society. Images were a powerful tool to shape the perception, and the profound understanding, of what the Cold War really was. Having grasped the potential of the cinematic sector, politicians and public opinion makers realized it was necessary to intervene in the filmmaking process. The Cold War became a real propaganda conflict between the Eastern and Western blocks, and as a consequence, this new mass media was another terrain on which to fight. Above all, cinema was highly attractive from a financial point of view, as it was a very lucrative and potentially highly profitable business for both American and Russian filmmakers. Since it was impossible for cinema, radio, television, and the press not to be touched by a conflict that lasted more than four decades, they became the key protagonists in the Cold War struggle to conquer people's hearts and minds. Images and sounds proved to be the most effective means to clarify or even create what, so far, had been perceived as a rather obscure, unclear, and abstract conflict. Cinema had the power to reify the Cold War's existence to the people's eyes.

This chapter has the primary objective of comparing Soviet and American film industries through a thorough examination of some selected movies. After briefly introducing Soviet and American cinematographic industries through different stages of the Cold War, this chapter will unveil the deep and intricate connection between history and movies. The analysis will be centred not only on the content of the movies but also on how they were made to explain why Cold War was presented in one way or another. In a nutshell, the propaganda war that arose in the cinematographic industries will be covered mainly from the

⁵¹ Pink Floyd, *Us and Them* from the album “The Dark Side of the Moon”, released on 4 February 1974.

cultural perspective, highlighting its main implications on the economic, social, and political realms.

The American Cinematic Industry During the Cold War

The leading actor in the American cinematographic industry is Hollywood. The latter was created during the 1920s and mainly constituted by eight major production firms: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Paramount Pictures, Radio Pictures Inc. (RKO), Universal, Warner Brothers, Columbia, Twentieth Century Fox, and United Artists. These owed more than 90% of all films produced and distributed in the US, and they were all anticommunist majors from an ideological stance. For convention, film outputs changed extensively during the Cold War as public ideology toward communism shifted through different eras. In order to better analyze movie productions and frame them more precisely, the years spanning from 1947 to 1990 will be divided into five periods for the sake of this first analysis of Hollywood's side of production.

From 1947 until 1953: War is declared through the use of negative propaganda

After WWII ended, diplomatic relations between the US and USSR drastically worsened. As a result, Hollywood had to rapidly establish its anticommunist values to explain and, in a way, justify such a deterioration. For this reason, in the late 1940s, the American cinematographic industry decided to declare war on international communism by releasing its first Cold War movie, *The Iron Curtain*.⁵²

At that time, the climate surrounding Hollywood was very tense, and there were many influential groups whose actions sensibly curtailed Hollywood's freedom on which film to produce and which stories to tell. First, the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals constantly sent directives to filmmakers on how they should have communicated the proper feelings of patriotism to the general public. Their main objective was to prevent any movie, even loosely affiliated with any form of communist ideal, from being produced. Secondly, the Catholic Legion of Decency also greatly influenced cinematic production. This group was founded in the late 1930s, and its main aim was to guard the

⁵² The movie was released in 1948, right after the declaration of the Truman Doctrine. It mainly dealt with the illegal espionage acts perpetuated by the Soviet government in postwar Canada.

soundness of the moral values and the political validity of American movies. This group was closely tied with another conservative censorship group in Hollywood, the Production Code Administration (PCA).

Finally, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was probably the most influential in shaping Hollywood's directives as it was run by J. Edgar Hoover, a true anticommunist, from 1924 to 1972. The FBI was in charge of discovering communists in the cinematographic apparatus and preventing them from releasing movies devised by communist propaganda. Furthermore, the FBI also lobbied to produce movies that would foster a positive image of the bureau as the protector of US citizens. However, there were also many people working in this industry voluntarily taking part in the anticommunist propaganda. To name a few, Walt Disney, Harry Cohn (the President of Columbia Pictures), Luigi Luraschi (the Head of Censorship at Paramount), and the famous director John Ford.

In most movies of that time, communists were depicted as cowards, diabolic and inhuman agents who only followed the party's instructions. They were usually portrayed as poorly dressed and as murderers. On the other hand, Americans were depicted as heroes, humble, brave, intelligent and, above all, democratic and capitalist. The latter were moved by the noblest values, such as God, the love for their families and country. In a nutshell, American movies of that period were designed to indeed "construct" the perception of the enemy, through the use of easily identifiable conventions, in the eyes of the American public.

From 1953 until 1962: soft-core propaganda to accentuate the positive

From the 1950s until the early 1960s, American movies positively promoted American values. Material prosperity, freedom of thinking, and democracy were among the essential values sponsored by Hollywood at that time. One of the American producers' primary goals was to literally sell, both on a national and international level, the American way of life as encapsulated by the propagandist term: "people's capitalism". This term indicated that the prosperity produced by capitalism could have been enjoyed by everyone and not only by the wealthier parts of society. It was no coincidence that America celebrated its material prosperity during those years on screen. The 1950s were the years of the economic boom, fueled by the profits of the defence industry, which led to incredible economic wealth. Films depicted the US as the land where everything was possible, rich in opportunities and material well-being. The American dream was on. However, cinema attendance was strangely declining in the 1950s, and Hollywood understood that it was vital to expand abroad. In

order to facilitate such expansion, the American government decided that it was time to remove tariffs and tax barriers of any sort. As a result, Hollywood started to export its production sites abroad, where labour costs were much lower. Through the so-called “runaway productions”, the US was not only managing to expand its sphere of influence to other parts of the world (mainly Western Europe, Latin America, and Asia) but also offset the rising costs of filmmaking on the national territory. Both from a commercial and diplomatic stance, America was winning.

From 1962 until 1980: propaganda pro-détente through the spread of fear

The decade of the 1960s was one of the most unstable in American history. Among the most prominent events of those years, it is mandatory to mention the 1962 missile crisis in Cuba, the beginning of the war in Vietnam, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, political protests moved by the raising feminist movements, and the advent of new drugs that shocked the established order of society. As a result, Hollywood’s movies were greatly influenced by such events, and the Cold War’s depiction trailed these political changes. Above all, a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety dominated the public environment, and people were confused about what direction US foreign policy was heading toward. Such uncertainty was reflected in films depicting the US as having lost its primary role in the Cold War. It was portrayed that it was now time for both the West and the East to come to terms with each other, find a peaceful agreement and stop playing a sick power politics game which had the potential to destroy the world. In this sense, Stanley Kubrick’s masterpiece, *Dr. Strangelove*, was emblematic in satirizing the Mutual Assured Destruction Theory by ridiculing American political leaders as sex perverts. This movie, regarded as one of the most important Cold War movies, was the first liberal assault on the American political and economic apparatus. Even more thought-provoking, Woody Allen’s *Bananas* was a direct attack on the Central Intelligence Agency, which was depicted as the “evil within” of the US. To conclude, movies of this period largely criticized American foreign policy, and they were rather harsh on the very existence of the Cold War, wondering whether or not it was necessary to protract this conflict further.

From 1980 until 1986: return to the past with a New-Right propaganda

The victory of Ronald Reagan marked a straight passage to the right side for American politics and, as such, the idea that the Cold War was no longer relevant was eventually swept away. The fight against the communist bloc was revitalized from an ideological and strategic point of view. Furthermore, the fact that Reagan used to be an actor and a former FBI informer in the cinematographic industry made American politics much more focused on propaganda and traditional media, which were wisely used to convey his political ideas. Movies were again made to depict the communist world as the “evil empire”.

From 1986 until 1990: the pursuit of peace

Cold War dynamics changed when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. As the Soviet government initiated the politics of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring), many filmmakers thought that a potential Soviet-American rapprochement was possible. Movies started to depict American and Soviet people as more similar than what it was used to believe. There were more similarities than differences. Emblematic was Rick Rosenthal's movie *Russkies*, released in 1987, a story of friendship between three American boys and a Soviet sailor. 1988 was another emblematic year as it was the first time Moscow hosted a major American Film Festival. Oddly enough, a movie from 1942, *Kings Row*, in which US President Ronald Reagan starred, was shown during the festival. Eventually, by 1990, the political tensions between the two superpowers were drastically reduced to the point that Gorbachev had already declared peace with the US.⁵³

The Soviet Cinematic Industry During the Cold War

In order to understand the importance that cinema had in Soviet culture during the 20th century, it is impossible not to quote Lenin's words: “*cinema is for us the most important of the arts*”.⁵⁴ This comment testified how Lenin had already understood the potentialities of cinema

⁵³ In 1990, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Mikhail Gorbachev "for his leading role in the peace process," which led to a radical change in East-West relations. Source: <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/peace/1990/summary/>

⁵⁴ Lenin is believed to have said these words during a conversation with the Bolshevik Soviet People's Commissar, Lunacharsky, responsible for the Ministry of Education in January 1917. Source: V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), Vol. XLII, pp. 388-389. Link at:

as a font of propaganda and as a mass communication tool to educate, influence or agitate the people. In 1919, cinema was officially nationalized under the authority of the Commissariat for Enlightenment. Three years later, in 1922, it was created the so-called Goskino, which was the short name for the USSR State Committee for Cinematography. The latter was eventually replaced by the Sovkino two years later, in 1924. During this primordial phase, cinema proved all its potential to mobilize the masses as short propaganda movies, named agitki, were released in the territories controlled by the Bolsheviks. However, a cultural and social revolution at the end of the 1920s led to Stalin's collectivization and industrialization campaigns. As a result, the cinematographic industry was centralized and the Sovkino, the former state film trust, was replaced by the Soiuzkino. The latter was profoundly anti-American and was against any western-style movies. The organization was also putting much pressure on soviet filmmakers by literally dictating to them the proper movies to make and how to title them. It can be stated that the cinematographic industry was in the complete service of the state. After the end of WWII and with the beginning of the Cold War, the relationship between the latter and cinema got more complex. In order to make the analysis clearer, the Cold War years have been divided into four main groups.

From 1946 until 1953: hardline propaganda in the early Cold War

The beginning of the Cold War was also Stalin's final years in power. These years were fundamental in shaping the foundations of the cinematic Cold War. It can be argued that this first period, from 1946 – 1953, was the one that received the most attention from the filmmaking industry as compared to any other period of the Cold War. Similarly to American movies of that period, Soviet movies also focused on the construction of the enemy. They are the perfect example of hardline negative propaganda. In the words of the famous historian Vladislav Zubok, behind the Cold War rationale lay a solid cultural competition between the two superpowers, which, in return, imposed tight control over the arts in this first period of the Cold War.⁵⁵ Weirdly enough, even though the Soviet government recognized the importance of cinema as a propaganda tool, these years were characterized by a severe decline in film output. As the numbers show, if during the 1920s the average

<https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1924-2/socialist-cinema/socialist-cinema-texts/lenin-on-the-most-important-of-the-arts/>

⁵⁵ Babitsky P., and Rimberg J., *The Soviet Film Industry*, (1955), pag. 49.

output per year was 150 movies, an average of 10 movies per year was instead produced in 1950 and 1951.⁵⁶ Such decline can be explained by the fact that the country was dealing with rising costs from the need to invest in postwar reconstruction at that time. However, it was necessary to revive the cultural apparatus of the USSR in order to respond to the pressing needs of the propaganda demands dictated by the Cold War. At that time, Zhdanovism was the dominant cultural policy in the USSR.⁵⁷ According to it, any form of art had to be put under stricter government control, and any form of Western influence on Soviet culture had to be demonized. The zhdanovshchina was also responsible for a vicious attack against Jewish culture in 1949 after some investments were made to the founding of the state of Israel. Another determinant factor that contributed to paralyzing the USSR's cultural vibrancy was Stalin's ubiquitous and oppressing presence in the filmmaking process. He not only boycotted many film scripts, but he also preferred to stop the mass production of movies and instead have a few of them released yearly of higher quality (5 or 6 per year). These movies were essential for Russian propagandists to respond to Western accusations, according to which the Soviet empire was responsible for many “*brutalities in the occupied territories, rapes being one of these*”.⁵⁸ Soviet propaganda focused on responding to these allegations by investigating Allied troops' destructive behaviours and depicting the Marshall Plan as a trap to export American imperialism. Funny enough, even though the Cold War had just begun, Soviet propagandists wanted to highlight the peaceful character of the Soviet nation as opposed to the belligerent American imperialists. Following this reasoning, the first Soviet Cold War movies did not deal directly with the conflict but focused instead on the demonization of the enemy and the emphasis on the Soviet peaceful nature. To summarize, early Cold War Soviet movies pursued two main political objectives. First, a primary objective was to depict Americans as evildoing, warlike, and imperialists. Secondly, it was vital to create an opposition between the two superpowers. On the one hand, there was the peaceful socialist Soviet Union, which sustained internationalist ideas. On the other hand, there was the destructive American empire, moved only by its capitalist-imperialist ideals. However, as

⁵⁶ Ibid., pag. 243.

⁵⁷ The name derives from its creator, Andrei Zhdanov, who initiated such a cultural policy in a written resolution of 1946. The main aim was to free Soviet culture from “*servility before the West*”. Source at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Zhdanovshchina>

⁵⁸ Pechatnov V., *Exercise in Frustration: Soviet Foreign Propaganda in the Early Cold War, 1945–47*, in “The Cold War History” Vol. 1, No. 2, (2001), pag. 3. Link at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/713999921>

it will be shown later on in the thesis, this first wave of Soviet Cold War movies was not successful in achieving the objectives mentioned above.

From 1953 until 1978: the era of positive legitimation through the use of positive propaganda

When Joseph Stalin died in 1953, there was a significant change in Soviet culture. In 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev denounced the cult of Stalin in his famous Secret Speech at the Twentieth Party Congress, there was a change in Soviet cultural politics. Under his leadership, there was a cultural Thaw.⁵⁹ Accordingly, censorship was eliminated, and writers started to publish again. Western values began infiltrating inside cultural circles of universities and academies. As a result, the Main Administration of Cinema Affairs was created as a new organ of the Ministry of Culture and replaced the old Ministry of Cinematography. This move gave a greater deal of freedom to Soviet filmmakers, whom the government no longer constricted since cinema was no more under the direct influence of the Party.

The cinematographic industry largely benefited from this change in direction and production sore again as in the 1920s. At the end of the 1950s, an average of a hundred movies was produced per year.⁶⁰ In this period, many cult movies were released, such as *The Cranes are Flying* (1957) and *The Ballad of a Soldier* (1959), which had great success both nationally and internationally. A great change from previous movies was that these were instead putting greater attention on the human cost of the Cold War rather than following usual plots on the perfidy of the West. It must be noted that American movies of the 1930s had largely influenced the generation of the Thaw era.⁶¹ The exposition to these images on screen radically transformed Russian youth and, to them, going to the movies was an occasion to learn about Western values. Even though Brezhnev, who was considered to be a hard-liner, was elected in 1964, the era of the Thaw in cinema continued until 1978.

⁵⁹ This name came from the novel's title written by Il'ia Ehrenburg in 1954.

⁶⁰ Youngblood D., and Shaw T., *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet Struggle for Hearts and Minds*, (2010), available at: <https://www.perlego.com/book/532921/cinematic-cold-war-the-american-and-soviet-struggle-for-hearts-and-minds-pdf>

⁶¹ One of the principal authors of this era, Joseph Brodsky, who also won a Nobel prize, famously stated that “the Tarzan series alone did more de-Stalinization than all Khrushchev’s speeches at the Twentieth Party Congress and thereafter”. Source: Berlina A., *The American Brodsky: A Research Overview*, in “Resources for American Literary Study”, Vol. 38, (2015), pag. 195 – 211. Link at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26367565>

From 1978 until 1986: a return to hardline propaganda

The election of President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s ended any feeling of tranquility among the two superpowers. In 1980, the refusal from the US to take part in Moscow's Olympics was the manifestation of such a rise in tension. With the election of Ronald Reagan, the situation even got tenser. Reagan's presidency was characterized by a strong feeling of anti-sovietism and the frequent use of bellicose terminology (for instance, his definition of the SU as the “evil empire”). Reagan's presidency began in a period of great economic and political turmoil for the SU, where in just three years, from 1982 to 1985, three Party Secretaries died (Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko). Furthermore, the ongoing war in Afghanistan only exacerbated the international political climate. From a cultural point of view, there was a comeback of the anti-American rhetoric in Soviet movies as during Stalin's era. Accordingly, Hollywood was depicted as anti-democratic, and American people were depicted as uncultured and ignorant.

From 1986 until 1988: the end of the cinematic Cold War during the glasnost era

With Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, the cultural Thaw eventually led to the end of the Cold War. In general, there was a rapid decentralization of the Soviet cinematic industry. There was a change of leadership in the Goskino, where the reformist Aleksander Kamshalov replaced the conservative Filipp Yermash. Among the most remarkable changes, Hollywood was no longer perceived as an enemy to win but rather as an example to follow. Glasnost was so successful in rooting itself deeply into the cinematic Cold War that it eventually led to its end in 1988, a year before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Even in this case, culture was ahead of time and history, and the end of the Cold War was anticipated on the big screen.

Conclusion Section One

This first section of chapter two has shown how the US and the SU were engaged in a cinematographic warfare during the Cold War. On the one hand, the US produced hundreds of movies annually and had extraordinary international successes, dominating box office earnings. On the other hand, Soviet cinema was struggling to produce enough pictures to

satisfy its internal demand and, notwithstanding its competition with the West, it was obliged to import American movies. Apart from rare periods, such as the Thaw era, Soviet movies struggled to have success abroad, apart from Eastern Europe. It can be asserted that such differences in size and popularity between the two cinematographic industries were the product of Soviet cinema nationalization and centralization in 1919. Consequently, movies were put under severe scrutiny and control, exercised by the State and the Party, throughout the entire conflict. As argued before, only after Stalin's death filmmakers enjoyed a higher degree of freedom from censorship and artistic autonomy. In stark contrast, even though there were strict commercial boundaries to respect, American cinema was much freer from a political point of view. In a nutshell, the fact that the American cultural environment was much more vibrant and heterogenous, composed of a great variety of film producers, directors, and distributors, was one of the most determinant factors for the ultimate winning of the cinematic Cold War. In the following part of chapter two, some critical thematic issues of the Cold War will be analyzed through the eyes of some selected movies. In particular, each section will be devoted to a particular theme of the Cold War. Such themes will be analyzed by comparatively studying a Russian and an American movie, of different Cold War periods, to find similarities and differences between the two cinematic traditions.

A War Justification

From a propagandistic point of view, one of the most important themes during the Cold War was to depict, or even better to construct, the enemy in the eyes of the general public. When a nation goes to war, it is necessary to have a clear vision of who or what the enemy is. Even from a visual perspective, it is necessary that people know what they are fighting against. The US and the SU had the necessity to explain to their populations what the Cold War was. In fact, during WWII, it was not challenging to demonize fascism or Nazism since the latter had produced terrible crimes that were under the eyes of everyone. There was no necessity to explain who the enemy was. In stark contrast, the Cold War was defined as "cold" because it did not have clear-cut images of atrocities or dramatic aggressions that could be presented to the public. During this conflict, even though the relations between the US and the SU got gradually tenser, their conflict was one of a silent nature, often understated, yet with the potentiality of an escalation to a nuclear war. However, after WWII ended, it was quite a mission for both sides to present the other as the new enemy. On the one hand, American filmmakers were wondering how it was possible to depict Russia as the

new enemy, if only some months ago the latter proved to be a vital ally for the demise of Nazi fascism. On the other hand, Russian filmmakers had a similar problem in depicting the US as an imperialist power after all the wealth generated by the Lend-Lease program. Furthermore, after WWII, both nations were exhausted and wanted to avoid engaging in a new conflict.

The darkest period of the Cold War was its beginning, from 1947 till 1953, during which both US and Soviet propaganda had the same objectives. As already said, the first objective at the beginning of any war is to clearly define the enemy. For this first comparative analysis of American and Soviet cinema, two movies will be analyzed. The movies in question are: *The Meeting on the Elbe* and *Man on a tightrope*.

The first is a Russian movie produced in 1949, containing all classical early Cold War themes. It is a perfect example of hard negative propaganda and the visual manifestation of the anti-Americanism spirit of that time. The movie serves two significant objectives. The first was the one of representing the US not anymore as an ally but rather as the new enemy. However, in the picture, an important distinction is made. As a matter of fact, the American military apparatus, the American government, and American industrialists are the enemies to be fought, but that does not mean Americans as a whole. In this regard, the movie director Grigory Aleksandrov declared that his movie was not about “*American people; rather, it concerned a specific group of monopolists and allies of American imperialism*”.⁶² The second objective of the movie was the one of justifying the emergence of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe. In this sense, this movie's propaganda targets the Soviet people and the people living in neighbouring countries. It is no coincidence that *The meeting on the Elbe* is the only movie of this historic period about post-war reconstruction in a satellite state. In brief, the movie is set in a fictional German city, Altenstadt, divided by the Elbe river, where US and Soviet military forces met in 1945. One part of the city is reviving thanks to the virtuous administration of major Russian Kuzmin, whose high moral qualities helped restore the city's social and moral order. The other side of the city was ruined by the presence of the corrupted Americans, led by the sinful General MacDermott and a few drunken officers.

⁶² Aleksandrov G., *Epokha i kino* (1976), pag. 251.

On the American side, the movie *Man on a Tightrope*, released in 1953 and directed by Elia Kazan, also made accusations against the new Cold War enemy. This movie showed the totalitarian nature of Soviet imperialism. As *The Meeting on the Elbe*, *Man on a tightrope* is set in post-WWII Europe, and it tells the story of the Czechoslovakian members of a circus troupe that moves from East to West. Through this movie, Hollywood could portray all the negative aspects of communism, such as poverty, fear, violence, manipulation, and distortion of everyday reality. Following this reasoning, the SU embodied in the eyes of American ideology, "the other". In this way, the general public was presented with the idea that, under the Iron Curtain, life was so tough and miserable that any people would travel thousands of miles just to escape it. In Hollywood's eyes, the world was divided in two: on the one hand a free and full opportunities side of the world embodied by the West; on the other hand, there was a closed and enslaved East.

In conclusion, during the beginning of the Cold War, both movies were key propaganda tools to present to the respective audiences what the enemy looked like and why it was essential to fight it. However similar the two movies can be in their intentions, i.e. construct and show the enemy's perception and distinguish one's identity from the "other", there are two substantial differences that must be noted. First, *Man on a Tightrope* is less nationalistic than *The Meeting on the Elbe*, in which great emphasis is put on the SU's role in saving from moral, political, and economic decay in post-war Europe. Secondly, when compared to each other, it is clear that Hollywood already possessed more significant resources than its Soviet counterpart. Even though *Man on a Tightrope* was relatively cheap, its scripts, action scenes and actors made it an incredible success showing Hollywood's more efficient filmmaking process. Furthermore, Hollywood benefited from the greater number of connections it had with Western Europe, which provided a conspicuous market channel where its productions could be exported and better received from a cultural point of view.

American Materialistic Well-being or Soviet Scientific Progress?

Having established what the two nations were fighting against, it was time to show the audiences what they were fighting for. It was time to prove whose way of life was more virtuous and beneficial to the post-war world. During this new phase of the Cold War struggle, American and Soviet movies presented the benefits associated with their respective "ways of life" as opposed to the other. The 1950s were, in this way, a decade during which

the propaganda shifted from an offensive stance to a calmer form of cinematic salesmanship. In a nutshell, movies of this period can be categorized as a form of more flexible, “soft” propaganda. It is clear that a broader political and economic shock had initially created such a cultural shift. On the Soviet side, Stalin's death in 1953 led to the Thaw era in cinematic productions, where communist ideals drastically changed. On the American side, there had been a change in the cultural paradigm dictated by new diplomatic and commercial needs to export, or better to sell, American moral values abroad. The two movies considered in this section, which perfectly exemplify such changes, are *Roman Holiday* (1953) and *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956). On the one hand, the former synthesizes the new vision of American values defined as materialistic pleasure. On the other hand, the latter perfectly encapsulates the Eastern propensity to scientific advancement.

The movie *Roman Holiday* was devised to sell the American dream abroad, especially in Western Europe. Under the shape of a more delicate form of positive propaganda, this movie was made to reveal the material prosperity created by the postwar American economic boom. These movies presented America as a land full of abundance and opportunities. Hollywood possessed the means to export such vision abroad as it dominated the international film trade during the Cold War struggle. One of the main reasons for this commercial superiority lay in the fact that Hollywood's leading international trade organization, i.e. the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA), had a systematic method to abolish import quotas on American movies, in Europe above all. In this way, Washington was using Hollywood as a propaganda tool to facilitate the export of liberal capitalism mainly. Even though *Roman Holiday* apparently did not have anything related to the Cold War, this movie was key in presenting and selling the Western way of life. According to it, the West was happy, fun, elegant and modern. The movie portrays an obsolete and imprisoned monarchy eventually liberated by American democratic values and consumerism. The movie is set in a resurgent Italy, in Rome, where the material benefits provided by the Marshall Plan contributed to creating an environment full of life and wealth. More importantly, the movie focuses on the fact that such material comfort and spiritual joy can be enjoyed by all, even ordinary people. Furthermore, the movie was crucial in restoring the image of a former enemy, Italy, and how this country had been revitalized thanks to the generous help of the American government. The movie helped spread the message that American and Western values were the same and shared the same interests and dreams. The connection between *Roman Holiday* and the

Marshall Plan was even more profound. As a matter of fact, part of Marshall's ERP was destined to finance, through Hollywood's assistance, a political campaign against communism in Western Europe. Already in 1948, American movies had been crucial for the final victory of the pro-American Christian democrats during the Italian elections.⁶³

The movie *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* was released in 1956 and had the political purpose of praising the Russian people and their lifestyles in order to show the inherent superiority of the Soviet system. It is the classic example of early Thaw cinema, and it was an attempt to legitimize the benefits of Soviet life positively. At that time, the Russian cinematographic industry was focused on positive forms of propaganda through which it was possible to show the audience realistic images of life in the USSR. In contraposition to the heightened beauty of life in *Roman Holiday*, *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* is more a depiction of ordinary people facing problems of ordinary daily life. This type of human-scale movies was called bytovoi films, which dealt with daily life situations, and domestic audiences largely appreciated them. As stated by film scholar Julian Graffy, "*Spring on Zarechnaya Street brought a new attention to everyday life visible in the settings, in the acting style, even the way characters looked*".⁶⁴ It was a genuine domestic movie which depicted the intrinsic values of daily life, which dealt with the valorization of the personal traits of Russian citizens. In opposition to the corrupted materialistic spirit of the West and its elitist attitude, Russian people were depicted as simple, sociable, and moved by a feeling of friendship and love towards their country. Instead of depicting a fantasy world, as *Roman Holiday's* director William Wyler tried to do, Khutsiev and Mironer (the directors of *Spring on Zarechnaya Street*) instead preferred to convey a message of normality, trying to construct a more credible and positive image of Soviet life. If *Roman Holiday's* major objective was to convert international audiences to the Western way of life, *Spring on Zarechnaya Street's* main concern was to depict how divided Soviet society was and the problems stemming from it. According to the directors, the only way possible to heal such a division was to persuade domestic audiences, especially the ones of the Eastern bloc, of the rightness of the Soviet way of life. This movie was mainly an attempt to provide the

⁶³ The deep connections between American foreign affairs, Italian politics, Hollywood, and Cold War can better be grasped by quoting Luigi Luraschi. The latter was the Head of Foreign and Domestic Censorship at Paramount, who firmly believed that "*Hollywood had a crucial part to play in exporting positive American values*". Source: Saunders F., *Who Paid the Piper?*, (1999) pag. 289–290.

⁶⁴ Kelly C. and Shepherd D., *Russian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, (1998), pag. 183.

right example for young men and women in a post-Stalinist socialist society. In the movie, Russian youth dispose of few material luxuries, for instance they have no television, and rely on social relations for their fun. In a nutshell, the potency of this movie lies in its simple depiction of reality, the concrete hope of young people for a better future, with better jobs and living conditions. The movie does not create a fairy tale out of the audience's reach and real possibilities, but it grounds its images to a concrete reality in which a new "spring" is possible.

In conclusion, both movies analyzed did not have any connection to the Cold War. However, it is possible to reveal hidden messages and ideals that lie underneath the surface by giving a closer look at them. As a matter of fact, *Roman Holiday* and *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* have relevance in the Cold War scenario as both present their visions of what defines modernity, both received financial support from the respective governments, and both highlighted once again the connection between politics and culture. More importantly, both are an example of the power of visual images in shaping people's emotions. On the one hand, *Roman Holiday* was the visual representation of US confidence in showing internationally America's superiority. The tight link between the US and Western Europe was proved with the release of this movie, which used Italy as a base for the film's production. Rome, resurgent from the ashes of WWII, was itself the most potent image of the US's wealth and generosity of American capitalism. In this regard, *Roman Holiday* is one of the clearest examples of Hollywood-style diplomacy. On the other hand, *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* was the Soviet effort to reconstruct Soviet society after Stalin's death. With this movie, Soviet directors Khutsiev and Mironer tried to provide young generations with a visual image upon which reconstructing public confidence in the Soviet way of life was possible.

Nuclear Exhalation: a Defensive Deterrence or a Death Game?

As it has been argued, the US and the USSR stood in two completely different ideological positions. Such opposition was reflected in their cinematographic apparatus. In Hollywood's vision, the US protected freedom from any form of totalitarianism. In stark contrast, Soviet cinema depicted Russia as the only country which was supporting real progress against America's imperialist capitalism. During the first two decades of the cinematic Cold War, most filmmakers were moved by a profound sense of patriotism for their respective country, producing movies that would only emphasize an us-versus-them mentality. However, as the

conflict aged and as it entered its third decade in the 1960s, many film producers were wondering no more whether the conflict was correct or not, but whether it was worth fighting in the first place, given the potential of nuclear threats. As opposed to the 1950s, during which American and Russian cinemas were oppositional to each other, during the 1960s, it was understood that there were many things in common. Due to diplomatic, cultural, social, and political changes of that decade, many filmmakers started raising deep concerns about the very existence of this conflict due to its possible exhalation on a nuclear level. In 1962, two movies were released, *Nine days in One Year* and *Fail-safe*, right after the Cuban Missile Crisis. As a result, these movies perfectly encapsulated the fear of those uncertain times. They exemplified the changing nature of Russian and American positions on the terrible risks associated with nuclear science.

The movie *Nine Days in One Year* celebrates Russian scientists' role in Soviet life. It could be argued that the main aim of the movie was to valorize the figure of the nuclear physicist, depicted as the true martyr hero. After the death of Stalin, the importance of nuclear science was recognized by the Soviet government, and it was understood that Russia had to make progress in the nuclear field.⁶⁵ With Khrushchev, the status of scientists began to change, especially for nuclear physicists. In the 1960s, it was understood the tremendous potential nuclear science could have in the Cold War. As a result, more freedom and state aid were given to scientists, and new research sites were constructed to replace older ones. Under Khrushchev, “*scientists became elite members of Soviet society, a status derived from their ability to innovate*”.⁶⁶ The decision by Russian director Mikhail Romm, a master of Soviet propaganda, to make a movie on the life of a nuclear scientist was full of political significance. Furthermore, just a few years before, in 1955, there was the first successful detonation of the hydrogen bomb by the Russian government. This movie was just the continuation of this process and, as a matter of fact, the movie's protagonist Gusev is said more than once to have worked on "the bomb" throughout the story. With Gusev, a new generation of Socialist heroes was born, as he incarnates the scientist model par excellence. In contraposition to

⁶⁵ During Stalin's era, it was hard for scientists to conduct efficient research since the Party leader distrusted scientists and imposed strict control on them through a high degree of centralization. According to Ethan Pollock, the source of the Great Leader's distrust towards scientists was their close ties with the West due to "*the inherent cosmopolitanism of science*". Source: Pollock E., *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, (2006), pag. 75.

⁶⁶ Ibid., pag. 218.

older models, he is silent and melancholy but also unselfish and incredibly smart. He does not seek glory as he refuses to name a discovery he has made after his name, as the name "Gusev effect" sounded ridiculous. Notwithstanding that he has only a few months of life left due to an accidental exposure to radiation, he never abandons the laboratory and his research. He sacrifices his life in the name of science, which is not only a synonym for progress but also a new means of defence for his country. The movie is the visual expression of the Mutual Assured Destruction Theory (MAD) that was developed at that time, according to which developing the nuclear bomb was the only way to prevent a nuclear holocaust. The protagonist reinforces the validity of the concept of the MAD by revealing that he contributed to creating the atomic bomb as the only way to prevent American aggression. However, the movie is also a strong critique of the unintended side effects of nuclear power, as shown by Gusev's decaying physical state and increasingly fragile health conditions. Here lies Gusev's martyrdom, namely in his understanding that his life is nothing compared to the greater dynamics of history.

Fail-safe was part of a cycle of anti-Cold War and anti-nuclear movies released in the 1960s. At that time, the American cinematographic industry was experiencing great changes. First, new generations of the post-WWII economic boom were willing to experiment more and produce more liberal movies. Consequently, due to the fall of the traditional studio system, many independent producers started producing more politically sensitive movies. Secondly, the competition from television pushed filmmakers to think more creatively, both from a social and an artistic point of view.

The movie was written by two political scientists, Harvey Wheeler and Eugene Burdick and, in many ways, it was similar to *Nine Days in One Year* as it depicted the risks associated with the nuclear Cold War. In a nutshell, the movie tells the story of a communication accident in the American Air Force, which, due to an electronic malfunction, sends a wrong message to its pilots with the instruction to launch a nuclear attack on Soviet Russia. The movie continues with the desperate and vain attempts to stop the bombers from deploying the first nuclear strike. Both movies indeed presented the dangerous dynamics associated with the nuclear holocaust and how these had invaded the sphere of people's private life, eventually requesting the ultimate sacrifice from its protagonists. However, in stark contrast with *Nine Days in One year*, this movie cast many doubts on the very existence of the Cold War itself and whether or not it was too dangerous. Accordingly, the movie focused much more on

the potentially devastating consequences of nuclear war rather than on the heroic gestures of scientists. In this sense, *Fail-Safe* was the first American movie to investigate the causes of an accidental nuclear war. As a consequence, it was one of the most persuasive attempts to denounce the nuclear deterrence theory. From a political point of view, the date of release of this movie could not have been better. Released in October 1964, just two years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, the movie profoundly influenced the outcome of the elections, which were to be held just a month later, in November. As a matter of fact, safeguards on nuclear weapons were a significant issue during that presidential campaign and the Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater, was in the midst of political turmoil after he had controversially proposed to handle authority over nuclear weapons to NATO's supreme commander in Europe. Such a claim only fueled the electorate's anxieties about potential military actions devoid of civilian control. In such a confused and scared environment, the movie *Fail-Safe* largely contributed to the final victory of democratic nominee Lyndon B. Johnson.⁶⁷

In conclusion, *Nine Days in One Year* and *Fail-Safe* marked a stark shift from the usual cinematic Cold War dialectic. The former exemplified the change in the post-Stalinist Thaw era, which started to focus more on the private lives and emotions of ordinary individuals, giving attention to the precious work conducted by nuclear physicists in the scheme of the Cold War. However, its critique and skepticism about atomic science are more nuanced and veiled compared to *Fail-Safe*'s direct offence to one of the pillars of the American Cold War's strategies, i.e. nuclear deterrence theory. If the former still portrays a form of noble spirit in the ultimate sacrifice of life in the name of progress, still acknowledging the burden associated with nuclear science, the latter strongly condemns the way the nuclear war had been conducted by the US government, proving that the time had come in Hollywood to oppose the narrow-mindedness associated with such an obsolete US nuclear strategy.

⁶⁷ White House Press Secretary, Bill Moyers, predicted that the movie would have helped Johnson's victory. He actually stated that "*the film should have a pretty good impact on the campaign in our favour, since it deals with irresponsibility in the handling of nuclear weapons*". Source: Suid L., *Guts and Glory: The making of the American Military Image in Film*, (2002), pag. 239.

Soviet Conservatism vs American Anarchy

The 1970s seemed to be a more distended era in Cold War politics, and it looked like the conflict was about to end. In 1972, American President Richard Nixon travelled to Moscow and just a year after, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev did the same by visiting the US. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were increasingly more frequent and relaxed. This period of détente was at its peak in 1975, when the two countries signed a historic human rights agreement, the famous Helsinki Accords. Even though it could seem like things were getting better on the surface, deep down, Cold War dynamics were instead getting more complex than ever. Proxy wars spread around the globe, including Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. The oil-shock crisis of 1973 fueled a climate of fear and uncertainty, leading to financial crises in significant parts of Western Europe. Above all, the scientific race to nuclear weapons has continued through the years and eventually intensified. Although Russia and the US adopted similar strategies on the cinematic territory during the 1960s, in the 1970s, the two superpowers resorted to two completely different communication styles. On the Soviet side, Brezhnev returned back to the soft-propaganda style of legitimation, by producing movies that would eventually praise the cult of the Great Patriotic War and that would celebrate the Soviet military apparatus. The Kremlin planned to outspend the US in military expenses for defence. In stark contrast, Hollywood continued to put the accent on its questioning of the Cold War, wondering whether the conflict was worth fighting for.

In 1971, the highly conservative movie *Officers* was released in Russia. It portrays the story of two close friends – Alexei and Ivan – who are both proud soldiers in the Soviet army. They stand together through difficult times of war and remain loyal to their profession until the very end. The conservative ideas of the film scholar Aleksander Karaganov largely influenced this movie. According to him, the primary function of Soviet cinema was to educate people about communism, which consisted “*in the struggle for a new society, a new man, an art of high ideals and high values in which I and We are unified within the space of the collective*”.⁶⁸ The movie *Officers* was the visual representation of such a vision, and it wanted to celebrate the role of the military forces in forging Soviet greatness. During that decade, military officers enjoyed a higher social status, and the movie's primary objective was to present an account of Russian history from the point of view of military personnel. As a matter of fact, Russia had just increased

⁶⁸ Karaganov A., *Kino v borbe za sotsialnyi progress*, in “Sovetskii ekran”, No. 18, (1971), pag. 4 - 5.

its defence spending by more than 40% between 1965 and 1970.⁶⁹ In contrast with Khrushchev's policies focused more on domestic issues, Brezhnev concentrated much of the national resources on reinforcing the military apparatus. As a result, the movie emphasizes the adversities faced by military officers, hardened by values of self-sacrifice, discipline and fidelity towards their nation.

On the other hand, American cinema continued the process of dissent that the movie *Fail-Safe* had started. Following that stream, Hollywood's opposition to the protraction of the Cold War reached its peak in the 1970s. At a sociopolitical level, this was a turbulent decade in the US. Many protests against the Vietnam War, the Watergate Scandal, and the rising unemployment rates and urban crimes all contributed to creating a more tense political climate. As a result, a new generation of more liberal-minded artists decided it was time to oppose the Cold War fiercely. Woody Allen's movie *Bananas* perfectly exemplifies a harsh critique of the American establishment. The movie wisely satirizes the American environment, attacking its political institutions, religious groups, the CIA, the FBI, the mass media, and the judiciary system. Allen included in its strong critique also the liberal left environment by ridiculing young protesters and feminist movements. *Bananas* was the visual condemnation of the Cold War, putting the entire American political system under scrutiny. It did not only criticize the US government's foreign policy decisions of using the Third World as a mere political playground, but it also depicted left liberals, who were highly critical of Washington's stance, as complete idiots. However, as suggested by its title, the movie is, above all, a symbolic representation of the US hegemonic dominance over South America through its United Fruit Company, a corporation that had long been associated with forms of neo-colonialism. In a nutshell, Allen's film was primarily an attack on US imperialistic stance in Latin America. In stark contrast with the depiction of the USSR in the movie *Officers*, the US depicted in *Bananas* is moribund and divided. New York, once the pearl of vibrant American life, is now depicted as poor, polluted and dangerous. Paradoxically, the splendour of the American way of life, characterized by freedom, democracy, wealth, and elegance, as presented in the movie *Roman Holiday* in the first phase of Cold War propaganda, was no longer present on American screens by the end of the 1970s.

⁶⁹ Reese R., *The Soviet Military Experience*, (2000), pag. 140.

In conclusion, as these two movies have demonstrated, American and Soviet cinematographic industries were opposed in their approach to the Cold War issue during the 1970s. *Officers* provide a Soviet understanding of Russian society, in which people must be devoted to their communist motherland. On the other hand, *Bananas* casts a skeptical vision of American society as a whole, harshly condemning its imperialistic foreign policies in Latin America. *Officers* was the renovated proof that Soviet movies were overall conservative on a political and artistic level. Like many Russian Cold War movies, *Officers* was also a military drama. On the other hand, *Bananas* proved that American Cold War movies were much more heterogeneous, having a broader spectrum of genres covering the issue, even comedies. It could be argued either that Soviet filmmakers enjoyed less freedom in treating the Cold War as a fun topic or that Hollywood was more prone to capitalizing as much as possible, even from this terrible conflict. Whatever the reason, though, American movies contributed much more to the creation of a Cold War culture through visual images as compared to their Soviet counterpart.

The Last Movies of the Cinematic Cold War

At the end of the 1970s, precisely in 1979, the USSR invaded Afghanistan. With this invasion, the SU was trying to reduce the perceived menace coming from the neighbouring state of Iran and the Islamic radicalism associated with it. The climate of détente was over. On the other part of the world, the new Republican President, Ronald Reagan, had just won the elections by defeating Jimmy Carter in 1980. The former Hollywood actor immediately raised US defence expenses and introduced new policies that were projected not only to contain communism but to erase it. These events contributed to restart what most scholars now tend to call the second Cold War, which started in the early 1980s. Notwithstanding the advent of televisions, cinema still had its crucial part in the political panorama. For instance, in the movie of 1984 called *Red Dawn*, former US Secretary of State Alexander Haig was recruited by movie directors as a script consultant to give the movie the right ideological tint. The movie was about a dystopic future in which the US was invaded by Soviet-Cuban forces, leading to the beginning of the Third World War. This again proves how much movies were still soaked in ideological and propagandistic battles. It was during the 1980s that the cinematic propaganda between the American and Soviet filmmaking industries reached its acme. In this phase, messages of potential coexistence were no longer, and positive legitimation was abruptly substituted by images of fierce confrontation between the two

countries. This last final part of the chapter focuses on this cinematic return to the face-to-face contact with the Cold War opponent. On the Soviet side, the movie *Incident at Map Grid 36-80*, released in 1982, will be analyzed; on the American side, the movie *Rambo: First Blood Part II*, released in 1984, will be at the centre of this comparative analysis.

After the election of Reagan, the Soviet press immediately adopted anti-American rhetoric. Tensions continued rising when the American President defined the USSR as the "evil empire" after he deployed the so-called Strategic Defence Initiative of 1983. The movie *Incident at Map Grid 36-80* was the cinematic response to this perceived assault and marked a return to old-style negative propaganda. The plot revolves around a group of USSR navy pilots who, after having offered help to an American submarine, discover the presence of nuclear missiles, which, due to a computer malfunction, are set to fire on Russia. From a political point of view, it is essential to highlight that the movie centred on Russian and American navies as they had key roles during Cold War confrontations. As a testimony of such political relevance of the navy sector for the Soviet army, it is impossible not to quote the words of the former Admiral of the Fleet, Sergei Gorshkov. In 1972, he declared that "*the Soviet Navy is a powerful factor in the creation of favourable conditions for the building of Socialism and Communism, for the active defence of peace and for the strengthening of international security.*"⁷⁰ The director Tumanishvili wisely decided to give importance to this crucial sector of the army and, as a result, much time of the movie is devoted to the construction of the Soviet characters and to the development of their stories so that the viewer could empathize with their fates and not with the Americans'. In this way, Soviet officers are depicted as heroes, always thinking about the greater good and protecting the entire world. They are depicted as peace-loving, and their ultimate goal is to protect humankind as a whole and not only national territories.

The trilogy of *Rambo* was released during the second Cold war (1982, 1985 and 1988), and it was an extraordinary success nationally and abroad.⁷¹ The character John Rambo, the American Vietnam War Veteran played by Sylvester Stallone, became, without doubt, the US's most important cinematic Cold War icon. From a political point of view, *Rambo* was

⁷⁰ Moore J., *The Soviet Navy Today*, (1975), pag. 29.

⁷¹ The Rambo Franchise grossed a total of 819 million dollars. Source: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/>

the visual representation of the bullish spirit present in many parts of the US during the presidency of Reagan and the message that being anti-communist was cool again. A new term was coined, i.e. “Rambo-ism”, which intended this new feeling of revitalized patriotism in the hearts of American citizens. At the movie's end, the protagonist also makes a political speech calling for more US decisiveness overseas. As a matter of fact, there was a general belief in the 80s that there were still some American soldiers, classified as missing in action, that were held as hostages by Vietnamese communists. The movie was an important vehicle to spread the message that Moscow was conspiring with the Vietnamese government to imprison innocent Americans. The enemy is depicted as heartless, with the Vietnamese killing women, treating prisoners as sub-humans, and the Russians torturing Rambo for fun. In stark contrast, Rambo represented a mighty America that could stand for freedom and justice. Rambo’s muscular body is the visual representation of the military might of American foreign policy that Reagan adopted at that time, who had been defined as the “*quintessential macho president*” by the American scholar John Orman.⁷² Even though the Reagan administration had no part in the movies, they acknowledged its value in depicting American values of patriotism, honour, and responsibility. It could be argued that due to its glorification of the war in Vietnam, the movie might have contributed to increasing the public tolerance of another military intervention in Latin America, a potential target of Communist invasion, according to the New Right. It is reported that the movies had been shown to soldiers in the Middle East to boost their morale. In Russia, many Russian artists condemned the movie as expressing anti-Russian phobia.

In summary, during the 1980s, American cinematic culture was characterized by intense feelings of patriotism, as demonstrated by the movie *Rambo: First Blood Part II*. On the other hand, Soviet cinema was much more focused on showing that the SU was fighting for world peace, as shown in the movie *Incident at Map Grip 36-80*. However, it must be noted that the spirit of anti-Americanism present in this movie was nothing compared to *Rambo's* spirit of anti-Sovietism, which was not accidental but carefully devised with political and cultural maneuvers. In conclusion, these movies are proof of how movies were still influential in shaping people's appetite for propagandistic Cold War entertainment. They prove how fierce

⁷² Jeffords S., *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era*, (1994), p. 12.

the conflict still was in the 80s. Even though the movies could suggest that the East-West confrontation was about to escalate again, peace was unexpectedly around the corner.

CHAPTER THREE

The Evolution of American Cinema in the Post-Cold War Era

*“Walls in people’s heads are sometimes more durable
than walls made of concrete blocks.”⁷³*

After acknowledging the relevant impact of culture and cinema on the shaping and unfolding of the Cold War, this chapter will be devoted to the massive influence this conflict had on American cinema, even after its official end in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. It is indisputable that the Cold War has been one of the most significant events that comprehensively impacted American culture from the end of WWII until the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, World Wars apart. As argued in the first two chapters, culture and movies in particular, as the most important form of entertainment, were vital in the struggle for the hearts and minds of US citizens. It has been proven that the Cold War permeated every cultural aspect of any American and Soviet art form. From a cinematic point of view, it significantly influenced how movies were made, which films had to be produced, and how the public had to understand them. Much has been written by the US and Soviet propaganda on the importance of movies as key weapons to win the global struggle for ideological supremacy. In this framework, it has been fundamental to understand movies not only for their visual content per se but more relevantly for the period in which they were made. Even though the Cold War ended more than thirty years ago, there is still an ongoing debate on its origins. Some scholars have argued that the US government has systematically created this conflict to expand itself from an economic and cultural level. Economically, it has been shown how the US granted billions of aid packages to Europe and its citizens; culturally, the threat of communism represented a possibility for the US government to invade people’s private lives concerning security and surveillance issues. Cold War propaganda was used to invade Europe, as the latter was fundamental for American economic prosperity and security. Through culture and movies, the US was presented as the guarantor of freedom, while the Soviet Union was depicted as the evil force trying to enslave the entire world. However, the end of the war was sudden in many aspects and came as a shock to many. After almost half a century of a split world, the Berlin Wall fell, the USSR crumbled to pieces, and the Cold

⁷³ This is a famous quote by Willy Brandt, former chancellor of West Germany from 1969 until 1974. Source: Brandt W., *Erinnerungen (Memories)*, (1989).

War was gone. More importantly, the ideas that characterized American society during this period suddenly disappeared. However, as proven by the birth of the Ukraine War, the animosity that fueled the Cold War competition between the US and the Soviet Union is still present today. Was the American Political Scientist Francis Fukuyama right when he talked about the end of history back in 1992? It could be answered that his affirmation was rather too definitive as history has shown itself as having more of a cyclical nature, more in line with Nietzsche's thought. However, it is clear that, even though the Cold War *per se* was thought of as finished in 1991, much of its underlying dynamics remained alive and kept burning under the ashes for more than 30 years. With Russia's military invasion of Ukraine as part of "*a special military operation*", the Cold War is more alive than ever.⁷⁴

As it will be mainly analyzed in this chapter, with the end of the Cold War, there was a fundamental shift in the popular culture of American society and foreign policy. Above all, since there was no longer the possibility of a communist invasion, public ideas about the US being a target of a foreign invasion became obsolete by the end of the 1990s. As it will be highlighted with an analysis of American movie trends in the post-Cold War period, the main difference with the ones of the Cold War era was related to a change in the fears and paranoia that characterized American ideology. More precisely, during the Cold War, there was a constant enemy to the American world, i.e. communism, and such a ubiquitous fear permeated all areas of American popular culture. Paradoxically, the presence of an external threat embodied by communism gave great stability to the American political parties as they all agreed on defending their country from the Soviet Union. As soon as the latter capitulated, the major political parties, no longer united by a common enemy, started to go against each other. Hollywood producers made fortunes by capitalizing on such fears and paranoia associated with communism and the potential escalation to a nuclear war. During the Cold War, filmmakers could easily base most of their movies on this event, but when it was over, most of the common understandings that so far had been taken for granted suddenly disappeared. Some genres were impacted more than others. For instance, the James Bond

⁷⁴ Many International Relations scholars have been writing about a return of the Cold War. In a prominent article in the Financial Times, entitled "Ukraine and the start of a second Cold War", it is argued that if "the first cold war ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the second, it seems, began with the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Source: <https://www.ft.com/content/34481fbd-4ca7-4bb3-bef5-e68fefed7438>

franchise suffered the most from the disappearance of the West against East narrative. Superhero movies were also severely impacted by the end of the conflict as the common understanding of what constituted good, on the one hand, and evil, on the other, became more blurred in the post-Cold War period.

In conclusion, at least from a cinematic point of view, the Cold War never ended. As it has been proven in the first two chapters, the Cold War had a massive and ubiquitous influence on the interpretative framework for American movies. It will be argued in this third and last chapter that the absence of the Cold War radically revolutionized those interpretations, giving American filmmakers the challenge, yet the opportunity, to find a new national identity in the post-Cold War period. The thematic constituents of Hollywood movies have continually evolved accordingly to the different governmental policies of each era. For instance, during the 1950s, the main enemy portrayed were Nazis, while in the 80s, communists. In a nutshell, if the Cold War had a tremendous influence on the way movies were made, in what they meant, and eventually how the grand public interpreted them, its absence must have had an equivalent, if not stronger, impact. The central movies' function to systematically produce the perception of an external threat to the eyes of the American public in the pursuit of identity creation has substantially remained the same. The post-Cold War was much more complex as it was no longer characterized by a simple bipolar world. Therefore, after the end of the Cold War, movie makers had to fill a void left in the public collective with the disappearance of communists as the main enemy to fight. Furthermore, a broader array of issues came to the forefront of political debates, with incredible transformations in society's conventions on topics related to consumerism, gender, class, and ethnicity. Consequently, all these transformations increasingly became present in the movies of the post-Cold War era. The movies that will be analyzed to conduct this analysis have been selected because, when they were released, they had enough success to impact American popular culture. They also were symbols of important American ideals.

The first part of this chapter will analyze the shift in American cinematic ideology as related to the presence of external enemies. As already stated multiple times, one of the main issues American filmmakers had to deal with in the post-Cold War era was the disappearance of the communist threat. As a result, such a void had to be filled in the political rhetoric. That space was eventually occupied by creating another external threat, i.e. international terrorism.

It will be shown that one of the main changes from the Cold War movies to the post-Cold War was related to the presence of a new enemy, i.e. international terrorism. However, even though it might seem paradoxical, the presence of such an external threat stabilized American politics. Following Cold War rhetoric, these new movies followed the example of Cold War movies, where an American identity was created against the presence of an external enemy. Therefore, through the analysis of the new villain characters of the post-Cold War movies, it will be shown how much American cinematic culture has evolved through the years and how much the Cold War influenced such an evolution.

The second section of the chapter will be devoted to analyzing superhero movies. In particular, the movies of Superman and Batman will be analyzed to demonstrate how the notions of good and evil shifted and how society's new paranoia was represented in the superhero franchise after the Cold War.

The third and last part of the chapter will compare one of the most famous action heroes of the Cold War, James Bond, with his post-Cold War rival, Jason Bourne, the hero of the new century. Comparing these two heroes will show how changed American society was after the end of the Cold War struggle.

Hollywood and the War on Terror: a New Type of Villain

A crucial part of understanding the changing ideologies and concepts of different eras tends to be reflected in the different ways of portraying movie villains. Through Hollywood's visual representations of what an enemy is, a lot can be understood about audiences' daily life fears. A convincing and truthful villain, credible in the eyes of the public, roots its validity into a preexisting anxiety or paranoia, already present in the audience's mind. After the end of the Cold War, a new enemy was to be found in international terrorism. Even though the theme of terrorism was already present in Hollywood's productions long before 9/11, with the disappearance of the Red Menace from the geopolitical scenario, terroristic narratives have become a powerful resource for cinema. Furthermore, due to America's deeply rooted gun culture, plots about anti-terroristic missions filled with cutting-edge scenes of gun fires set in exotic locations did have a natural cinematic appeal. The terroristic attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, planned by Al Qaeda, undeniably increased the public's attraction to terrorism. As a consequence, always framed in the logic of the good versus evil battle, Hollywood's productions of movies with terroristic plots considerably rose in the

post-Cold War period. From a political point of view, the world after the demise of the SU was a much simpler world, characterized by only one global hegemon, i.e. the US. As a result of the 9/11 events, the US adopted an aggressive foreign policy against jihadist terrorism, which eventually gained remarkable consensus during Bush's presidency. However, it could be argued that it was US's aggressive military stance in the Arab/Muslim world that eventually increased militant anti-US sentiments. The focus of this chapter will be to show how the American propaganda machine activated itself during this new war against this new enemy. The dialectic strategy adopted by the media culture of these new Hollywood movies revolved around a rather simplistic idea. Accordingly, global terrorism was conducted by a small group of evil psychopaths, such as Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, to annihilate Western society.⁷⁵ Once again, as Cold War rhetoric thought, the battle of good and evil was between the Western world, which embodied freedom, democracy, and prosperity, against the Muslim world, which was represented as primitive and barbaric. In such hypocritical depictions, US military operations were seen as legitimate. In post-Cold War American cinema, the "Middle East" became a land of fear and destruction in the public imagination, which substituted the Soviet Union from an ideological point of view. This new political scenario was completely absorbed by the cinematic apparatus, which effectively capitalized on it. However, it must be noted that Hollywood's interest in terrorism dates back to the period of the Second World War. In 1942, Alfred Hitchcock's movie *Saboteur* was based on the historical event about a mysterious burning of an American warship, the U.S.S. Lafayette. The movie follows the protagonist's heroic action, who eventually opposes himself against these planned terroristic attacks by Nazis on US warships and anti-terrorist plots, in which the agent fights against terrorist associations working to sabotage Western culture.⁷⁶ Three decades after the release of these movies, their plots proved to be prophetic, and by

⁷⁵ The 9/11 Commission Report perfectly encapsulates the fears of that time. Accordingly, it stated that “*a new breed of Islamic terrorist has emerged from the downtrodden societies of the Middle East. Attached to no nation but infiltrating many, its strategy is to inflict mass casualties and attack no less than the heart of Western civilization. The preeminent practitioner of modern terrorism is Osama bin Laden, and in the space of a decade he has managed to draw the United States into a declaration of global war: new tools of counterterrorism, more aggressive strategies and tactics—and an unprecedented focus on the threat of devastating violence in the American homeland.*” Source: The 9/11 Commission Report, The Final Report of the National Commission of Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, (2003), pag. 421. Link at: <https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf>

⁷⁶ More precisely, *Dr. No* (1962), *Goldfinger* (1964), *Thunderball* (1965), and *You Only Live Twice* (1967).

the time the 9/11 events happened, such fantasies of destructive scenarios had transformed into reality.⁷⁷

As stated before, with the end of the Cold War, communists were replaced by Arab/Muslim terrorists as the new villains in this new cinematic terrorism. Starting with the cycle of movies called *Delta Force* (which were released from 1986 to 1991), made essentially in Israel with Israeli funding, the terrorist villains were depicted as barbaric, brutal and capable of tremendous atrocities. In the movie *Delta Force 3*, the terrorists are from Palestine and plan to destroy the city of Miami. Another movie released in 1988, *Frantic*, directed by Roman Polanski, portrays the story of a group of alcoholic Arabs who try to set a nuclear attack against the US. As later commented by the eminent cultural studies scholar Douglas Kellner, these xenophobic caricatures of Arab people shockingly resembled previous Nazi and fascist representations of Jewish people in the European popular culture of the 1920s and 1930s.⁷⁸ Other stereotypical movies of that time include *Navy Seals* (1990) where dozens of Palestinians are killed and referred to as “scumbags”; in the movie *American Ninja 4: The Annihilation* released in 1991, a psychopath sheikh planning to bomb the city of New York is eventually punished by the American Delta Forces; the film *Patriot Games* (1992) portrays the bombings carried by the US military in Libya against terrorists' camps. Interestingly, this movie again anticipated the air bombardment against Iraq, ordered by President Clinton in 1998.⁷⁹ It is worth also mentioning James Cameron's *True Lies* released in the year 1994. This cult movie remains to this very day, an accurate example of the 1990s counterterrorist spirit of Hollywood, in which American values of patriarchy and military superiority are ardently defended, and Arabs are extremely demonized. The increasing levels of violence of those years in the US, as testified by the first attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and the Oklahoma City attack of 1994, coupled with an exacerbation of the Gulf War and the Palestine-Israel conflict, eventually brought to life many more mediocre, yet popular, stereotypical terrorist movies. Among them, *Under Siege 2* (1995), *The Rock* (1995), *Executive Decision* (1996), *Air Force One* (1997) were among the most successful. All these movies

⁷⁷ It is fascinating how art forms tend to be anticipatory of history. In this sense, it is impossible not to quote Jacques Attali's theory, according to which "*music holds up a mirror to society, as its social organization and forms reflect society's mode of organization...Music not only mirrors social organization, it also carries a prophecy of the future*". Source: Giddens A., and Sutton P., *Sociology*, (2017), pag. 764 – 765.

⁷⁸ Kellner D., *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity, and Politics in the Contemporary Moment*, (1995), pag. 86.

⁷⁹ Source: <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/clinton-orders-air-attack-on-iraq>

featured, as the main villains of their plots, Middle Eastern terrorists. These characters echoed the American general public's deepest paranoid thoughts, further augmented by the daily cruel images produced by the American media culture.

A particular mention must be made to *The Siege* (1998), a movie that again proved the power of visual images in prophetically anticipating tragic events. The plot revolves around a series of secretly planned terroristic attacks on Manhattan, where high-explosive bombs are detonated across the city. Even though it was highly improbable that any of these scenes would have eventually happened in reality, the images of the devastation of New York represented a daunting premonition for future events. This movie is different from the previous ones mentioned in this section as its plot is more politically articulated. The fictitious Congress' decision to resort to martial law by violating Constitutional grants, prophetically anticipated the Bush-Ashcroft Patriot Act of 2001.⁸⁰

However, as it can be grasped from the analysis of these movies produced during the 1990s in Hollywood, the general plot structure still heavily relied on the residue of Cold War myths. Such threats and dichotomies created by these movies, always proposing an “us against them” mentality, served the US government strategically to legitimize its military actions in the Middle East area. Hollywood films that dealt with the topic of terrorism reached their highest moment during the 1990s. These movies demonstrated how any transformation in world politics' dynamics was eventually captured both by the cinematic and the political approaches to terrorism itself. These movies also carried critical values of the American ideological hegemony of that time, such as the patriotic spirit, the guns culture, the hyper-masculine hero, and the phobia of "alien" menaces, which are all essentially a heritage from the previous Cold War era. Due to their apparently apolitical nature, these terrorist movies are a rich source for understanding many of the cultural stereotypes and ideological biases of post-Cold War American society. As the previous Nazi and Communist threats already did, these new villains did not only embody a military threat to the US but they also posed a direct threat to the very moral fabric of US society, to its national security, and to the peace and freedom of the civilized Western world as a whole. Furthermore, the long-lasting tradition of putting attention on alien demons, as done during the Cold War, perfectly

⁸⁰ The Act has been largely considered controversial as it severely hindered citizens' civil liberties on the grounds of defence from terrorism. Source: <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1096/usa-patriot-act-of-2001>

matches the Manichean understanding of international politics, in which military solutions are strongly encouraged to deal with problems.⁸¹

The Evolution of the Superhero Genre: Batman vs Superman

The Superman Franchise: a New Meaning of Heroism

The most defining characteristic of superhero movies is the marked line that divides good and bad, the light against the shadow, the hero and the antagonist. During WWII, it was quite straightforward to distinguish between good, represented by the US and its allies, from evil, represented by Hitler and Nazism. After WWII, the American propaganda apparatus was quite sophisticated in constructing the enemy's perception through its various art forms, cinema and movies above all (see section 1, chapter two). It has been argued that constructing an enemy, the communists, to the eyes of the general public was fundamental to conduct, and eventually win effectively, the Cold War struggle against the SU. In classic superhero movies of the Cold War, the line dividing good and evil was clear and straightforward, i.e. superheroes were inherently good while villains were simply evil. However, after the Cold War, this line became more blurred, and concepts of good and evil assumed much more complex forms in the superhero genre. Such changes were the direct reflections of a constantly mutating society. Before understanding such mutations that came to the forefront after the end of the Cold War, it is essential to understand the origin of superhero movies. The latter has been present in American collective thought since the years before WWII.⁸² Initially, comic superheroes represented a sense of American exceptionalism from a propagandistic point of view. In this sense, Superman arrived on earth from an alien galaxy as a symbol of hope in times of great fear and insecurity. Superman's plots have constantly evolved through different eras and his enemies. For instance, appearing for the first time in 1939 as the first American superhero, he initially attacked enemies who stemmed from the economic Depression period. For instance, these were ethically unscrupulous business people, violent husbands, or war mercenaries. Over time, the villains he confronted changed and became more maniacs with a totalitarian vision of destroying the American way of life.

⁸¹ Boggs C., and Pollard T., *Hollywood and the Spectacle of Terrorism*, in "The New Political Science, A Journal of Politics & Culture", (2006), pag. 14.

⁸² For a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the origin of American superheroes, see Lawrence J., and Jewett R., *The Myth of the American Superhero*, (2002).

In 1940, the new supervillains included Lex Luthor, a knowledgeable man with a twisted mind, with a sick desire to subjugate all of Europe and bring warfare on a global scale. It is impossible not to see the figure of Adolf Hitler in such a characterization. Similarly, the cover of the Captain America debut in comics dated 1941 depicted him punching Adolf Hitler (see figure 1).



Figure 1: what could have been a better way to introduce this new Marvel hero? As a result, Captain America became the symbolic win of the US over Nazism. (Source: https://www.marvel.com/comics/issue/7849/captain_america_comics_1941_1)

Another famous superhero, named Spider-Man, was released in 1962, a topical year of the Cold War. It can be argued that the famous words of his uncle Ben, “*with great power there must also come great responsibility*” echoed President John F. Kennedy's words to the nations during his inaugural address: “*In the long history of the world, only a few generations have been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger. I do not shrink from this responsibility, I welcome it*”.⁸³

⁸³ The full transcript of the inaugural address of President John F. Kennedy, held on January 20, 1961, can be found at the following link:

As proven by these examples, there has always been a tight connection between the history of American Foreign Policy and America Propaganda through the creation of superheroes.

With the release of the first blockbuster superhero movie *Superman: The Movie* in 1978, just a few years after the Watergate scandal and the end of the Vietnam War, the iconic American hero was brought on the big screen during a turbulent time. This was a time when an American hero embodying American values was very much needed due to the fresh wounds of the humiliating loss in Vietnam, the high level of unemployment and the constant energy crisis, which were very present in the collective minds of Americans. These were also times of great nostalgia for American popular culture as the baby-boom generation was entering midlife and was melancholically looking back to the more prosperous 1950s. Following this line of thought, a straightforward plot which made a clear distinction between good and evil was thought to be the best cure by the entertainment sector to fill this nostalgic void. As a result, this movie follows the classic trajectory of Cold War movies with a sharp distinction between "us" versus "them". After the tragedy of Vietnam and the political disillusionment of Watergate, people grew even more nostalgic, a feeling that President Ronald Reagan and Hollywood successfully grasped. The former appealed to earlier Cold War dynamics with clear-cut divisive communication against the "evil empire";⁸⁴ the latter instead wisely and strategically monetized this nostalgic sentiment by releasing the first motion-picture version of Superman in 1978. It is essential to highlight that Superman's upbringing is signed with values of humility and responsibility typical of Midwest America, where he is taught to use his superpowers only for good actions. He is the so-needed American hero, coming to represent justice, truth, and the American way of life after decades of political scandals and humiliating and avoidable wars. On the other hand, the movie's villain, Lex Luthor, embodies the typical Cold War feelings of anti-intellectualism, according to which he is willing to kill just for economic gains and immoral hubris. The second Superman movie, *Superman II*, released in 1980, mainly revolved around self-sacrifice for the greater good, connecting directly with millions of Americans' hopes during the Cold War's later stage. At the end of

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-john-f-kennedys-inauguraladdress#:~:text=On%20January%2020%2C%201961%2C%20President,survival%20and%20success%20of%20liberty.%22>

⁸⁴ The full transcript of the famous "Evil Empire Speech" held by Ronald Reagan on March 8, 1983, can be found at the following link: <http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/reagan-evil-empire-speech-text/>

the Cold War, the superman movie was brought back to the big screen with the release of *Superman Returns* in 2006. The movie's central message is connected with the generally held idea that, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of communism and the Soviet Union, there is no longer a direct threat to the US and, as a result, there is no need for superheroes. Indeed, the movie is directly connected with the story of the two precedent ones. Superman has been away for more than five years and when he returns, people of American society seem to have forgotten about him and moved on. Even though on first appearance, it might seem that with the end of the Cold War, the US no longer needed superheroes, threats to public securities did not disappear but evolved with time. However, the movie failed to portray these new threats as the villain was always Lex Luthor with his maniac plans of killing people. Updating the trajectory of the villain's plans was a pivotal step in reflecting this passage of time in the post-Cold War scenario. In this sense, the new superman movie released in 2013, *Man of Steel*, successfully portrayed new menaces as natural disasters. With increasing concerns about global warming and unreversible damage to our ecosystem, the movie shows how Superman's original planet, Krypton, died due to a reckless depletion of the planet's natural resources. The more contemporary message of self-inflicted environmental degradation helped the filmmakers to connect more deeply with today's audiences. The film was also revolutionizing the way to portray villains themselves. The movie's villain, Zod, is an imperialist ruler seeking to reestablish Kryptonian elites by subjugating the earth as a new colony and exploiting its natural resources. However, his background story is deepened as it has never been done before in the superman franchise. More precisely, it is shown that he becomes the villain due to the upbringing he had. It is shown that Kryptonians have genetically manipulated his genes, and he was programmed to be a military leader. He is a victim as well. In this way, Zod can be seen as representing an allegoric image of the long-gone colonialist and imperialist European countries, even the old United States, which were turning the rest of the world into colonies to exploit. Furthermore, this new movie was designed to appeal to global audiences due to the new globalized era during which it was produced. This was particularly evident in a scene where he flies all around the globe. Eventually, this Superman symbolically represents not a simple American hero, but it represents a hero for anyone can root for.

In conclusion through the analysis of the franchise movie Superman, American society is shown as having moved beyond clear-cut dichotomies of right and wrong. In this sense, no

country is pure goodness or evil, as Reagan defined the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 80s. Such new blurred lines of heroism are represented by the development of classic superheroes and more complex villains, who are not simply evil *per se*, and the distinction between the two has become highly nuanced. By following the developing trajectory of superhero movies, notably Superman, during the 21st century, it has been proven that movie narratives have become more structured in representing what is meant to be heroic and what is meant to be a villain.

The Batman Franchise: from identity crisis to international terrorism paranoia

As already shown with the Superman franchise, in superhero movies, the main protagonist is always the same hero over time, while his/her enemies do change. In these movies, it is possible to witness the changes in the collective anxieties and fears of a given society through the evolution of the villain characters. As a testimony of such an evolution, this section will analyze the Batman franchise, comparing Tim Burton's movies of the late 1980s/early 1990s (i.e., the late stage of the Cold War) with the more recent ones directed by Christopher Nolan (released in the post 9/11 period). Although even the character of Batman has eventually evolved through the years, it is through the changes in the villains of Gotham City that it is possible to grasp the essence of the mutating audiences.

Burton's Cold War Batman was first released in 1989, just a few days before the Berlin Wall fell.⁸⁵ The director directly connected with a significant part of the audiences' anxieties of that time, the late Cold War period, to the ageing baby boom generation in particular. From a socio-political point of view, the key theme of the movie is identity as the constant presence of mirrors throughout the movie proves it. In the story unfolding, the audience is presented with a background story of the main characters, on how Bruce Wayne and Jack Napier eventually became Batman and the Joker, respectively. During the final scenes, Batman reveals to the Joker that he was the one that created Batman by murdering Bruce Wayne's parents. On the other hand, the Joker replies that it was Batman to create the Joker by dropping Jack Napier in a cistern full of acid. As shown by these scenes, the movie wants to explain how complex and antithetical the different sides of each personality are. Even though the Joker is presented as being a victim of trauma, as much as Bruce Wayne was, his actions

⁸⁵ The movie was released on October 20, 1989, while the Berlin Wall fell a few days later on November 9.

are not justified since he was already a psychopath, and the trauma only enlarged his mental depravation. However, Tim Burton's focus on complex identity and how difficult is to mark a line between good and evil, is further explored in his second Batman movie, i.e. *Batman Returns* (1992). The movie opens by telling the background story of the new villain, Oswald Cobblepot, and how he turned into a penguin. Due to his physical deformity, he was thrown away by his wealthy family into a waterway. Miraculously, the kid manages to survive, and once he becomes an adult, he seeks revenge against all the wealthy families of Gotham City. The focus of Tim Burton on identity and how blurred the distinction between good and evil is, are all a representation of the time in which the movie was released. In this sense, it connected with the desperate identity research of American culture at the end of the Cold War. As shown with the appearance of a new kind of enemy, i.e. Muslim and Arabs terrorists, the US was struggling with an identity crisis at the end of the Cold War. How could eventually a superpower exist without a super enemy to combat? Especially for the Baby Boom generation, which was particularly attached to the idea of being young, as testified by the youth cultures of the 1960s, those were difficult times, as they were having difficulty transitioning to adult life.⁸⁶ Identity issues were in the minds of American audiences in the years these two movies were released, and its generation was struggling with the fact that, by the beginning of the 1990s, they had the age of those establishment figures they once used to rally against.

Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy was brought to the big screen after the end of the 1990s culture war and after the 9/11 attacks. As a result, these monumental events that signed the lives of millions of Americans seriously influenced how the new Batman was to be portrayed. The new fears created by these events were made manifest in the reimagining of the villains. Furthermore, these movies continued to highlight how fluid the concept of good and evil is, as stated by the protagonist in one of the first scenes: “*the first time I stole so I wouldn't starve... I lost many assumptions about the simple nature of right and wrong*”.⁸⁷ This was a complete innovation as not many heroes have had the chance to state the understanding that right and wrong are rather fluid concepts depending on one's own point of view. Another essential scene that

⁸⁶ Many young Americans took part in a real counterculture revolution during the 1960s in which many of the previous generation's political, social, economic, and cultural values were widely rejected.

⁸⁷ *Batman Begins*, directed by Christopher Nolan (2005)

differentiates this new Batman movie from its predecessors, is one in which the protagonist refuses to kill a local thief as part of his training in the League of Shadows. When he rejects such a violent course of action, such a new moral code becomes part of this new post-Cold War hero, mirroring the separation of the American spirit of justice from murderous terrorists. This reading is suggested by the fact that there are significant similarities between the League of Shadows and Al Qaeda, as they both are terrorist organizations indoctrinated with ideas of absolutism and self-declared as the final arbiter of justice. As Al Qaeda stroke an attack against Manhattan in what they believed was an act of justice, similarly the League of Shadows plans on destroying Gotham as being too corrupted to be saved. Through the League's plan to destroy Gotham by using a hallucinogenic toxin, the movie directly connected with one of the biggest fear of the post-Cold War period, where the US would have been the target of new chemical warfare.⁸⁸ In this way, Nolan's Batman movies are far more connected to reality than their Cold War counterparts by preserving many features of realism throughout the trilogy. In the second Batman movie, *The Dark Knight* (2008), the most iconic Batman villain, the Joker, is reintroduced. This character is the visual representation of pure madness, who acts with no plan whatsoever and only in the interest of pure chaos and destruction.⁸⁹ Around this new character, all the new fears of the post 9/11 world are showcased, as this terrorist acts recklessly without rationalizing or reasoning. In this way, he perfectly embodies the complexities of the post-Cold War world. Following those tragic events, people became highly disillusioned towards public trust and democratic institutions.⁹⁰

Finally, by the time the third movie was released in 2012 with the title *The Dark Knight Rises*, the fears of American society had changed once again. The severe economic crisis of 2008, with increasing episodes of bank bailouts, fueled vicious class conflicts and, in a way,

⁸⁸ Betts R., *The New Threat of Mass Destruction*, in "The Foreign Affairs", Vol. 77, No. 1, (1998), pag. 26 – 41.

⁸⁹ As defined by Alfred, the butler of Bruce Wayne, Joker part of a category of men "*who aren't looking for anything logical, like money. They can't be bought, bullied, reasoned, or negotiated with. Some men just want to watch the world burn*". Source: *The Dark Knight*, directed by Christopher Nolan (2008).

⁹⁰Scholars Rothe and Muzzatti have written a brilliant paper on the intricate relationship between the mass media and of the political branches in creating and, eventually amplifying, the sense of moral dismay and the diffused sense of panic following the 9/11 events. Source: Rothe D., and Muzzatti S., *Enemies Everywhere: Terrorism, Moral Panic and US Civil Society*, in "Critical Criminology", (2004), pag. 327 – 350. Link at: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10612-004-3879-6.pdf?pdf=button>

substituted international terrorism in the heads of American citizens. As a result, class status is the leading theme of this last Batman movie. In summary, all Batman movies directed by Christopher Nolan mainly reflected the new anxieties of the millennium after the tragic events of 9/11 and international terrorism, as all villains try to annihilate Gotham as it had become too corrupted.

Through the analysis of the villains in both Burton and Nolan Batman movies, it has been possible to show the changing nature of American society's anxieties and fears. On the one hand, in Burton's Cold War Batman, the main issues were related to an identity crisis as the Cold War suddenly disappeared from the international political scenario; on the other hand, in Nolan's more recent depiction of Batman, it was possible to portray the new paranoia of the 21st century connected with the international terroristic attacks and with raising phenomenon of class conflicts fueled by the global economic crisis of 2008.

The Evolution of the Spy Genre: James Bond versus Jason Bourne

The Cold War has shaped Hollywood movies for more than forty years. As a result, when the conflict was over, filmmakers could no longer rely on it as a real-life backdrop for their plots and use it to establish a sufficient amount of believability in their movies. In particular, the spy genre was severely impacted by this event, as spy movies primarily relied upon the political scenario of the Cold War to construct their plots and villains.

Starting from its origin, it can be stated that James Bond set the cinematic standard for spy movies during the Cold War era. It is undoubtful that “*the introduction of Commander James Bond, Britain’s premier spy, remains an extraordinary moment in the cultural history of the Cold War*”.⁹¹ During the 1960s, these movies were viral in the US and John F. Kennedy, the President who dealt with one of the tensest moments of the Cold War, i.e. the 1962 Missile Crisis, was one of the biggest supporters of Ian Fleming's novels.⁹²

James Bond is an elegant and super intelligent secret agent working for the British Secret Service, namely the MI6, granted the double-o status license to kill. In the typical Manichean dialectic of Cold War propaganda, Bond represented “*goodness without ambiguity, facing a series*

⁹¹ Dodds K., *Screening Geopolitics: James Bond and the early Cold War films (1962 – 1967)*, in “Geopolitics”, Vol. 10, (2005), pag. 271. Link at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650040590946584>

⁹² Thomas E., *Robert Kennedy: His Life*, (2000), pag. 119.

of supremely sinister, evil, and grotesque villains, whose unbridled lusts and cruelty drives them towards world domination”.⁹³ In the first movies of the 1970s and 1980s, he seldomly works with women agents that possess the expertise needed for the mission's success, such as geology in *A View to a Kill* (1985) or nuclear physics in *The World Is Not Enough* (1999). However, they always tended to be secondary characters to the story as simply Bond's lovers. In these first movies, Bond is the predominant figure, a *primus inter pares*, charged with the burdensome task of saving Britain and the Western world. Furthermore, these early Bond movies were basically structured around the typical East-West Cold War divide and did not consider any other government apart from the US and the USSR. In the first Bond adventure *Dr. No* (1962), the villain disrupts the flight path of American missiles in Cape Canaveral by using a nuclear-powered device. In the 1965 James Bond movie *Thunderball*, the movie villain Emilio Largo demands a ransom of 100 million pounds in exchange for two NATO bombs he had previously stolen.

Instead, due to an ease in the Cold War tensions between the United States and the USSR during the 1970s, for the first time, the word *détente* was mentioned in the Bond film *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1977). In this movie, agent 007 collaborates with Soviet agents in order to save the world from nuclear war. However, with the new rise in tensions of the 1980s, more traditional plots of East against West came back. In 1983's *Octopussy*, the main villain is represented by an unscrupulous Soviet general who is against the rising cooperation between the West and the Soviet Union in nuclear disarmament matters. During the movie, his plan is to trigger a nuclear bomb in an American military base in West Germany by making it look like an accident, convinced that this will lead Western allies to disarm NATO military bases across Europe.

In 1985, with the beginning of Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and the resulting ease of tensions, a new James Bond was released, i.e. *A View to a Kill*, which was in many aspects a transitional movie.⁹⁴ In this film, there are still many Cold War features as Bond collaborates and simultaneously double-crosses with a Soviet agent. However, the film ends with him being awarded the Order of Lenin by the Soviets, which was one of the highest civil decorations bestowed by the SU.

⁹³ Cawelti J., and Rosenberg B., *The Spy Story*, (1987), pag. 128.

⁹⁴ Chapman J., *License to Thrill: A Cultural History of James Bond Films (Cinema and Society)*, (2008), pag. 201 – 203.

As the Cold War ended, the market for movies based on Communist enemies, willing to destroy democratic freedom and subjugate the entire world, came to a sudden end. The most famous spy agency in the Western world, James Bond, who used to protect the world against totalitarian communist agents, was becoming obsolete. Like many other movies heavily relying on the West-versus-East rhetoric, the James Bond saga nearly collapsed.⁹⁵ James Bond was indeed the embodiment of Cold War ideology as he would fight communism supplied by the government with cutting-edge gadgets in the name of duty, treat females as disposable objects, and save the world's external menaces. As the world evolved and history progressed, James Bond plots had to adapt to the new post-Cold War reality. Bond came back on the big screen in 1995 with the movie *Goldeneye*, where it was possible to film in Russia for the first time due to the end of the Cold War. In the early opening credits, it is possible to witness evident referrals to the demise of the Soviet Union with images of statues of Lenin crumbling down. More interestingly, it is possible to grasp the changed sexual mores of the 1990s in comparison to previous decades. What was considered an acceptable type of seduction behaviour in the 1960s started to be seen with nuances of sexual harassment in this new post-Cold War era. Such change is clearly portrayed when Bond meets with M, the Head of British Intelligence, who for the first time is a woman, telling him that “*he is a sexist, misogynist dinosaur, a relic of the Cold War*”.⁹⁶ This scene perfectly embodies the Bond movies' attempts to adapt to a mutating world while simultaneously trying to maintain the protagonist's appeal. Bond's scriptwriters eventually managed to write an adaptation of their script by reframing villains into a more post-Cold War identity, such as a hostile media tycoon or a North Korean general planning to invade South Korea.⁹⁷ Female characters also

⁹⁵ Black J., *The Politics of James Bond: From Fleming's Novels to the Big Screen*, (2000), pag. 159 – 168.

⁹⁶ Upton B., *Hollywood and the End of the Cold War*, (2014), pag. 63.

⁹⁷ It is worth mentioning the words of the media tycoon villain of the movie *Tomorrow Never Dies* (1997), “*words are the new weapons, satellites the new artillery*”. This sentence perfectly synthesizes the new menaces posed by the post-Cold War world, where traditional army operations are no longer viable means of power and conquest. Source: <https://cimsec.org/does-tomorrow-ever-truly-die/>

On the other hand, in the next Bond movie, *Die Another Day* (2002), the North Korean colonel defines as pathetic the fact that *the "British still believe to have the right to police the world"*. Again, these words encapsulate another widely held idea of that post-Cold War era, according to which, with the demise of the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom (and above all, the NATO alliance) had lost their justification for patrolling over the world. Source: <https://getyarn.io/yarn-clip/6c04342e-6a0d-43ff-a9c6-99b2e73e79bf>

developed, following this mutating cultural climate, into precious allies to Bonds' missions or as feared enemies.

Among other significant changes to these new plots, the protagonists began being depicted more as outsiders than insiders. As already demonstrated with the Superman and Batman franchise, villains' backstories were given much more attention to make their actions more reasonable and plausible to the audiences' eyes. Furthermore, as already noted with the many movies about international terrorism that characterized this new post-Cold War era, traditional enemies like Soviet spies were substituted with international terrorists. In the James Bond movies, the source of the enemies mutated from the SMERSH (Smiert Spionam), one of the Soviet Union's most secret departments, to SPECTRE (Special Executive for Counter-Intelligence, Terror, Revenge, and Extortion), a criminal and terrorist international group. The latter perfectly embodies the new type of menace of the new period as it is a Non-Governmental Institution, not aligned with any country or ideological belief. In its exploitation of the delicate relations between the East and the West, this assembly of international criminals, freed from national borders, seeks power and wealth through acts of terrorism.⁹⁸ In this sense, the new tendencies of apolitical globalism are shown in post-Cold War Bond movies. More precisely, Bond changed its Cold War nature by becoming the new post-historical global agent who faced new enemies no longer driven by ideology, such as communists, but by broader and more blurred capitalistic pursuits. Since ideological politics no longer mattered as it used to during the Cold War conflict, Bond's new villains became represented by the invisible hand of more globalized global markets. As argued by Chapman, in the post-Cold War era, 007 movies became increasingly depoliticized.⁹⁹

As with the Batman franchise, an identity crisis is another striking feature of the new era. The world of the post-9/11 events is a much more complex world than the one during the Cold War. Globalism, the digital revolution, and the ubiquitous and omnidirectionally information flows have paradoxically made people much more fearful, insecure, and disconnected. The new threats are nowadays posed by the omnipresent web and the global surveillance system, in a George Orwell's Big Brother fashion, with potentially catastrophic data leaks or loss of network controls. These new risks are much more dangerous than any

⁹⁸ Bennet T., and Woollacott J., *The Moments of Bond*, in *The James Bond Phenomenon: A Critical Reader*, (2003), pag. 19 – 23.

⁹⁹ Chapman J., *License to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films*, (2007), pag. 249.

old-fashioned physical military attack. Such fears have been absorbed by the Bond movie *Skyfall*, released in 2012, where the new up-to-date villain Raoul Silva is a brilliant computer hacker that threatens to destroy the MI6 by revealing agents' identities on the internet.

While Bond's movies had to adapt over time to the changing geopolitical scenario, the most representative post-Cold War hero can be found in the figure of Jason Bourne. The first movie of this new trilogy was released in 2002 with the title *The Bourne Identity*. The movie had such a success that two others were produced later with the titles *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004) and *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007). By being in so many aspects different from James Bond, this new antihero entirely captured the essence of the post-Cold War zeitgeist for the new generation that came after the Berlin Wall fell. The first movie opens with him being senseless and stranded in the Mediterranean Sea, with acute symptoms of amnesia. This beginning has been interpreted as a metaphor for the post-Cold War events, such as the 9/11 attacks, after which the world's conscience was shocked and reshaped by traumatic new events. This beginning symbolizes the hero's symbolic death in the shape of a traumatic abjection from his sociopolitical identity. Bourne's central theme deals with identity, as the character struggles throughout the three movies to regain conscience of who he really is. Furthermore, in contrast with Bond's characteristics, he is an outsider, kills only if necessary and does not dispose of many women. Instead, he falls in love and remains faithful to the same woman throughout the plot. In opposition to Bond, he does not enjoy any consumerist leisure, exotic travel and hedonistic freedom.

His only enemy is represented by the CIA, for which he used to work in the past and is now trying to kill him. As argued by Elsaesser, these Bourne could be defined as "*mind-game movies*" in which a traumatized abject agent must pursue an arbitrary journey while contending with contingent spatiotemporal shifts in both shattered memories and disoriented actions.¹⁰⁰ More precisely, the movies reveal a cognitive-corporeal mapping of both vertical subjective time and global horizontal space in which the protagonist, who embodies today's pathological subjectivity, struggles to orient himself in such a dangerous world.¹⁰¹ As already stated, the post-Cold War period is characterized by the paranoid presence of the war on terror. This

¹⁰⁰ Elsaesser T., *The Mind Game*, in "Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema", (2009), pag. 13 – 41.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

has led the sovereign system to intensify global surveillance, hindering democratic rights. In a nutshell, as a product of the failure of this system, agent Bourne struggles to find its identity against his former agency by resorting to terrorist actions to save himself from the corrupt system.

In conclusion, Bourne's movies show the inefficacies of secret agencies as guarantors of global protection. With the evolution of the last Bond movies and this new antihero, Bourne's spy trilogy, there has been a reevaluation of what a hero and a villain are in the eyes of the audiences. As a result of the fall of the Soviet Union, many post-Cold War movies have eventually tried to replicate the Cold War ethos by substituting Soviet villains with mainly international terrorists. However, as proven by these last streams of spy movies, the world that resulted after the fall of the Berlin wall was one of a much more complex nature, no longer characterized by bipolarity. In the immediate post-Cold War era, the US had to struggle with the fact that it remained the only world hegemon. Bourne's search for identity perfectly encapsulates this research struggle. In a sense, Bourne's movies inverted the polarity of good and evil as he becomes *“a new type of terroristic agent who refuses this reterritorialization of old subjectivity and leaves open the gap between the global system and its inherent inconsistency”*.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Verheul J., *The Cultural Life of James Bond: Specters of 007*, (2020), pag. 220. Link at: doi 10.5117/9789462982185_ch10

CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in this final work, culture and movies had a profound impact in the minds of the people that lived during the Cold War era. It has been proven that the events that were occurring between the US and the USSR influenced, and at the same time were influenced by, the cultural production of both countries during this period. The purpose of this final research has been to unveil, and comprehend, such synergy and invisible connection that bounded together history and politics on the one hand and culture, art and cinema on the other.

This first introductory chapter aimed to present the Cold War in a new light, i.e. through its cultural dimension. After briefly explaining the benefits of studying the Cold War from its cultural angle and providing the answers of the most important scholars on the subject, the massive role of culture in shaping the conflict has been deeply analyzed both from the Soviet and American perspectives. In this regard, three practical examples have been provided to show how culture – in three different realms, i.e. movies, music, and architecture – has been strategically used by both states to capture the hearts and minds of Europe. First, it has been argued that movies were crucial in the Marshall Plan scheme to foster a sense of European identity, a vital element in attaining the economic objectives set by the Plan itself. Through movies, European people understood the importance of uniting and cooperating and, as a result, the European economies became increasingly interdependent. Movies united people both by showing the common European heritage that everyone shared and also by depicting the Soviet Union as the common enemy to beat. Secondly, the power of American music, namely jazz and rock'n'roll, has been analyzed by demonstrating how it could massively influence younger generations of West German people. The music was the first instrument of protest through which young people could identify themselves against the values of the obsolete Weimar conservatism. Once again, music was fundamental in identity creation, providing a new path to what real Germanness meant in a time of great uncertainty right after the war's end. The final practical example provided had to do with Soviet architecture in Soviet satellite states such as East Germany and Poland. It has been said that the new architectural replanning of urban spaces, especially of destroyed cities such as Warsaw and East Berlin right after the war, was an incredible chance for the Soviet regime to root itself even more deeply in these territories. The shaping of the territory and the outlook of these cities could have been greater propagandistic opportunities for the Soviet Union to gain a

stronger foothold in the cultural Cold War dynamics. Eventually, the urban restructuring proved unsuccessful and too costly, and the harmonious buildings that had been built were soon replaced by cheaper constructions that at least temporarily resolved the housing shortage problem.

In the second chapter, it has been argued that cinema had a crucial role in propagandizing the Cold War. As a result, already from the beginning of the 1940s, undisguised movies with political messages, such as *The Meeting on the Elbe* and *Man on a Tightrope*, were released. Such a comprehension of the high potential movies had in influencing public opinion rose with time. It was understood that these political messages were more efficiently conveyed if they were hidden in a sense, shadowed, and propagated in an indirect cinematic way, as it was done with the movies *Roman Holiday* and *Spring on Zarechnaya Street*. Clearly, both cinematic industries had the same objective, namely fostering political consensus. However, Hollywood enjoyed a greater degree of freedom in comparison to its Soviet counterpart, and thanks to its state-private network, its multiple channels of distribution and its sparkling lifestyle, it was able to create a vigorous cinematic industry. On the other hand, even though censorship and control sensibly decreased after Stalin's death, the high degree of state control of the cinematic industry proved fatal in hindering Soviet creativity. Furthermore, the relationship between the government's organs and the film industries was much more relaxed in the US than in the SU. As exemplified by the movie *Officers*, movies were exposed to much censorship and influence from the Party directives, confirmed during both Stalin's and Brezhnev's eras. Another factor that historians tend to consider when comparing the two filmmaking industries is post-WWII reparation expenses. As a matter of fact, the US had not been economically damaged by WWII. Quite paradoxically, the American movie industry thrived during the conflict, registering record movie attendance. On the other hand, the USSR was economically devastated by the conflict, exhausted after three years during which it had engaged the German army. Following this reasoning, the SU was already trudging behind the American movie industry right from the start. Due to Hollywood's greater creativity and economic possibilities, the Soviet film industry spent much more time responding to what was said by the US government and US movies about the USSR. In this sense, the Soviet modality of producing movies was defensive rather than offensive. For these reasons, in the public relations struggle of the cinematic Cold War, the American ideals of democracy and capitalism were favoured in comparison to communism and Soviet

internationalism. Furthermore, Hollywood's job proved to be easier than its Soviet counterpart. The American film industry, indeed, was not trying to change public opinion through its movies, but rather it was trying to confirm to its people that its political and economic systems were the best available. On the other hand, the Soviet film industry first had to show that its system could work, and only after that, it could try to persuade the general public that its system was eventually better than the American one. However, there is no doubt that this type of propaganda has proven to be much less effective than reinforcement propaganda, and the cinematic Cold War confirmed this rule.

Above all, this chapter has demonstrated how movies helped shape and influence values throughout different stages of the Cold War. In this sense, it was proven that cinema conceptualized the Cold War itself. On the one hand, the Soviet filmmaking industry framed the Cold War ideologically.¹⁰³ In this sense, the Cold War has been systematically inscribed by Soviet cinema around the Marxist concept of class struggle, demanding to the Russian public a conscious choice of the Soviet ideology based on the realization of its veracity rather than fear or hate towards the enemy. In the Soviet optic, the Cold War was generally depicted as a struggle between peace and internationalism on one side and war and capitalism on the other. In this scenario, Soviet people were always portrayed as peace-loving and selfless, ready to sacrifice for the better good. On the other hand, even American cinema conceptualized the Cold War in a more subtle way. It could be argued that the Cold War conflict was the pretext that the American cinematic apparatus exploited to promote a set of ideology-free values, such as liberalism and consumerism, consistent with natural human predispositions. Many of these movies presented a binary approach to the conflict with dichotomous symbols such as democracy and communism, material wealth and poverty, and freedom and slavery, which were easy to comprehend and appealing. For instance, some movies had indirect and more subtle messages, like *Roman Holiday*, in which personal rights of liberties and material prosperity were associated with free-market capitalism. In conclusion, it could be argued that such an asymmetry in the different cinematic traditions has been the critical factor in understanding the different faiths of the two industries at the end of the Cold War. Since American tradition was never utterly dependent on the

¹⁰³ Shcherbenok A., *Asymmetric Warfare: The Vision of the Enemy in American and Soviet Cold War Cinemas*, in "Kinokultura": Issue 28, (2010), p. 12. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/232353/Asymmetric_Warfare_The_Vision_of_the_Enemy_in_American_and_Soviet_Cold_War_Cinemas

ideological dimension of the conflict, the industries continued faring well even after the conflict ended by replacing old communists with new enemies, such as international terrorists or mobsters. In stark contrast, the Soviet cinematic tradition had been too tightly tied to the ideological dimension of the confrontation and found it difficult to survive after its end.

The third and last chapter demonstrated how cinema dramatically changed after the end of the Cold War. It has been shown that, on the one hand, movies have comprehensively impacted people's minds and ideas during the Cold War. On the other hand, the conflict itself profoundly affected how those movies were eventually made and how the public received them. After having proven how interconnected movies and historic events are between each other, the third chapter more thoroughly analyzed how American cinema has evolved after the end of the Cold War. The demise of the Soviet Union left a void in the American collective that had to be filled. More precisely, as argued in chapter two, one of the most important tasks of American propaganda was to create an enemy to fight in order to affirm its own identity and validate its foreign policy actions in the eyes of the general public, the electorate. That place was eventually occupied by communists and all threats associated with them, such as a nuclear war or a potential invasion on American soil. Those were the main fears of the American people at that time. At the moment that the Cold War was over, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and by the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the American cinematic apparatus found itself devoid of ideas. Hollywood capitalized on this conflict during the Cold War by basing much of its movies' plots on Cold War-related themes. As the conflict ended and America became the only global hegemon, much of the ideologies and certainties that characterized the Cold War era disappeared as the Berlin Wall. This chapter started from this point, from Hollywood's exigency to find a new identitarian path. The first major change that could be found in post-Cold War movies was related to villains. As a matter of fact, the void of fear left by communists was replaced by international terrorists. This chapter's first part was devoted to analyzing new villains. Following the World Trade Center events, a cycle of American movies was made on the war on terror and international terrorism. As a result, following mass paranoia of the Middle East and Arab international terrorists, the latter became the main villains of many post-Cold War Hollywood movies. The analysis continued to portray the evolution of American ideology by studying the evolution of superhero movies (such as Batman and Superman) and the spy

genre (such as James Bond and Jason Bourne). These successful franchises were full of precious insights into how American society evolved since the end of the Cold War. As demonstrated with superhero movies, following the identity crisis created by the power vacuum left by the fall of the Soviet Union, most of the new villains started to be portrayed much more carefully, presenting the public with much more real backstories. One of the main changes of this period related to the more blurred distinction between good and evil. As a result, villains were presented to the public not just as pure evil but as characters with complex stories behind them. Following this reasoning, even though the villains' evil actions could not be justified, at least the inner complexity of their background stories gave a sense of the parallel complex world dynamic of the post-Cold War era. In a similar fashion, through the analysis of the evolution of James Bond, who was presented as the most iconic Cold War hero, it has been possible to demonstrate what profound effects had the end of the Cold War on Hollywood's movies. As a matter of fact, the double-o agent has evolved through the decades and has given increasingly more important roles to female characters, which instead used to be just as secondary to the plots and simply as Bond's lovers. Furthermore, even 007's antagonists evolved from the classic stereotypical characters of the Cold War, such as North Korean generals threatening nuclear destruction, to more complex characters, such as media tycoons or internet hackers. Such evolution eventually led to the creation of a new type of antihero with Jason Bourne, who perfectly embodied the confusion that followed the 9/11 events as an ex-CIA agent suffering from dissociative amnesia. His struggle to find his identity synthesized the fear of the new post-Cold War world, more globalized and complex, in which it is increasingly more difficult to understand who the enemies are and from where the threats come (as he eventually fights against former CIA colleagues). In conclusion, the Cold War was a massive event that shaped people's minds worldwide. Its influence comprehended different realms of the human imaginary, from politics to art and movies. As this conflict ended, Hollywood movies had to adapt to the new world that resulted from the demise of the Soviet Union. By analyzing the most relevant American movies of the post-Cold War era, it has been possible to demonstrate how massive this conflict has been in influencing American society and its fears. On the one hand, the necessity of American cinema to base its own identity against the contrast of an "us vs them dialectic", a heritage from the Cold War era, remained alive even in the post-Cold War period. As a result, a cycle of movies was produced by Hollywood filmmakers on the enemy of the new millennium, as embodied by international terrorists. As each epoque had its main villain,

for instance, the Nazis in the 1930s, and the communists in the 1980s, the post-Cold War world found this new enemy in international terrorists coming from the Middle East. On the other hand, the more complex dynamics of the new world, which is increasingly more globalized, digitalized and interconnected, led to the incredible transformations of superhero and spy movies. The plots of the former were characterized by an increasingly more blurred distinction between good and evil, with more sophisticated villains' backstory as to partially justify their course of action. The spy genre instead saw the evolution from the classic Cold War hero, as embodied by James Bond, to the new antihero of Jason Bourne, who, on the contrary, embodied all the insecurities coming with the new millennium.

In conclusion, movies have been incredibly powerful in shaping people's ideas and perception of the Cold War. Through their analysis, it has been possible to demonstrate the tremendous impact they had on the unfolding of the conflict and how much they influenced its final outcome. It has been proven that culture, in all its forms, has been the protagonist of the Cold War struggle, the primary battlefield on which the conflict has been fought. As shown with post-Cold War movies, the Cold War's heritage in terms of cultural traditions still influence movie narrative nowadays. Furthermore, with the ongoing Ukraine War, Cold War tensions are more alive than ever. The battle for the sphere of influences never ended and, following NATO's expansion in eastern territories, the Russian government decided to militarily invade Ukraine. Unsurprisingly, Russian bombings have widely targeted Ukrainian cultural sites, such as the destruction of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol. By destroying the cultural environment of Ukrainian life, the Soviets are trying to annihilate Ukraine in its entirety, wiping their name out of history. These events bring back the nightmares of Nazism, precisely on May 10, 1933, when "un-German" books were publicly burnt all-over Germany. As these two examples have demonstrated, throughout history many governments have tried, and are trying, to destroy their enemies by annihilating their culture. Culture and art are indeed the only manifestations of human existence on this planet and, through them, our thoughts and ideas come to life. Every human epoque has distinguished itself through different art forms. If during the Renaissance paintings and statues were the primary instruments to humanize and transcend catholic religion in Italy, movies were the most important propagandistic tool in the Cold War struggle during the 20th century. However, even though there are outstanding differences between these two historical periods, their core primary intent to influence people's life remained the same. The

question remains on whether or not movies are today still so important in vehiculating political ideals to the general public. It could be argued that movies nowadays are much less structured from a political point of view. Movies can nowadays be considered much more as a mere form of entertainment, devoid of any cultural meaning, a consumer product to be disposed of in a few hours and then to be forgotten. Furthermore, people's attendance to cinema has starkly decreased due to the Covid-19 pandemic. New streaming platforms, such as Netflix or Amazon Prime Video, have reshaped people's attitudes towards movies. The infinite availability of endless hours of visual contents and the astonishing comfort to easily access them from anywhere at any time have made people much more impatient and frenetic in their consumption of visual products. Having made all these considerations, can culture save us from this meaningless consumption, this cheerful dance into nothingness, that we, as human beings, are witnessing in this new highly technological era? I believe that culture is the vibrant hearth of each civilization and that cinema above all has the power to positively influence and socially bind together human societies. In stark contrast with streaming platforms, cinemas should be saved from its decay and people should be incentivized to physically attend the movies. As a matter of fact, smart phones and streaming platforms have led great portions of the younger generations to a status of mental laziness. Culture, art and movies have the power to awake sleeping consciences from such an intellectual torpor. Following from this, governments should invest much more on culture, by promoting and financially sustaining theaters, cinemas and art galleries. Unfortunately, even though Italy has planned an amount of 5,74 billions Euros investments in the cultural sector, this quote only amounts to the 2,44% of the entire National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). Considering the fact that the Italian cultural heritage is one of the richest on a global level, this sector deserved a much larger quota from the NRRP investments scheme.¹⁰⁴ It is my opinion that, a country that does not invest on culture is a country with no future.

¹⁰⁴ According to UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), Italy is home to the greatest number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, namely 58, and represents almost half of the world's great art treasures. Source: <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/it>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cold War was one of the longest confrontations between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet and Socialist Republics. Although it is rather challenging to find an exhausting definition of the precise years during which the conflict unveiled, most historians do agree on framing the period from the end of the Second World War, more precisely with the beginning of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, till the final disaggregation of the USSR, on the 25th of December 1991. As stated by one of the protagonists of the immediate post-World War era, Winston Churchill, an iron curtain was “erected” in the heart of Europe, an intangible line going from “Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic”.¹⁰⁵ Relations among Cold War actors rapidly worsened from the division of postwar Germany. Such a deterioration led to the spread of the conflict on a continental scale, eventually leaving Europe in the middle of two political dominions. On the one hand, Western European countries and the US formed the first block, i.e. the Western Block. On the other hand, the USSR formed the Eastern Block, which stood in stark opposition to the Western one regarding economic, social, political and moral values. Even though the division manifested itself through clashes of an institutional nature, diplomatic impasse, political confrontations, and proxy wars, the main focus of this final work lies in a more in-depth analysis of the cultural dimension of the Cold War. The two superpowers fought against each other in what could better be defined as an ideological campaign, with the main aim of influencing people's opinions on the best way of life for the future. Following this line of thought, it could be argued that there are many ways of studying the Cold War, and many of these have already been done by most scholars through the classic political scientists' rhetoric. However, a more original and fresher look at the unfolding of Cold War events could be provided to the public by studying some Cold War movies and, more in general, the American and Soviet cinematographic industries.

Throughout history, visual representations, such as paintings and theater plays, have always influenced people's perception about themselves and life in general. More precisely, this final work analyzes the role of cinema in the creation and unfolding of the Cold War between the

¹⁰⁵ Churchill's Iron Curtain Speech of the 5th of March 1946. Delivered in Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri. Full text at: <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1946-1963-elder-statesman/the-sinews-of-peace/>

United States of America (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Accordingly, it is argued that one of the most relevant grounds on which such a historic conflict was fought was the one of culture. As a result, many historians have started to address the Cold War as the “Cultural Cold War”. Following this line of thought, the research question of this final work is to understand how, and to what degree, culture has been able to create, define, and influence the Cold War in its entirety. Many aspects of culture are taken into consideration, such as art, architecture, theater plays, music, and movies. In particular, the role of cinema is analyzed more in depth through a comparative analysis of American and Soviet movies. Movies are indeed used as the primary source of information and, through an accurate analysis of their content, it is demonstrated the tight connection that existed between them and political ideas during the Cold War. In order to show the massive influence that culture had, through its various forms of art, in creating and shaping the conflict itself, the chapters are structured in the following way.

In chapter one, the general role of culture during the Cold War is analyzed. In stark contrast with traditional study approaches to the Cold War, which have usually examined this event through the classic fields of international relations, high politics and diplomacy, it is shown that the Cold War can be more efficiently, and clearly be grasped, as a cultural phenomenon. The vast propaganda warfare that interoccurred between the US and the USSR is the primary analytical starting point. In such a *Kulturkampf*, propaganda and culture were synergistically intertwined between each other's and the purpose of this first chapter is to demonstrate such a connection. After briefly explaining the benefits of studying the Cold War from its cultural angle and providing the answers of the most important scholars on the subject, the massive role of culture in shaping the conflict is analyzed both from the Soviet and American perspectives. In this regard, three practical examples are provided to show how culture – in three different realms, i.e. movies, music, and architecture – has been strategically used by both states to capture the hearts and minds of Europe. First, it is argued that movies were crucial in the Marshall Plan scheme to foster a sense of European identity, a vital element in attaining the economic objectives set by the Plan itself. Through movies, European people understood the importance of uniting and cooperating and, as a result, the European economies became increasingly interdependent. Movies united people both by showing the common European heritage that everyone shared and also by depicting the Soviet Union as the common enemy to beat. Secondly, the power of American music, namely jazz and

rock'n'roll, is analyzed by demonstrating how it could massively influence younger generations of West German people. Music was the first instrument of protest through which young people could identify themselves against the values of obsolete Weimar conservatism. Once again, music was fundamental in identity creation, providing a new path to what real Germanness meant in a time of great uncertainty right after the war's end. The final practical example provided has to do with Soviet architecture in Soviet satellite states, such as East Germany and Poland. The new architectural replanning of urban spaces, especially of destroyed cities such as Warsaw and East Berlin right after the war, was an incredible chance for the Soviet regime to root itself even more deeply in these territories. The shaping of the territory and the outlook of these cities were great propagandistic opportunities for the Soviet Union to gain a stronger foothold in the cultural Cold War dynamics. Eventually, the urban restructuring proved unsuccessful and too costly, and the harmonious buildings that had been built were soon replaced by cheaper constructions that at least temporarily resolved the housing shortage problem.

The second chapter continues this cultural analysis by using Cold War movies as the primary source of information. By Cold War movies it is meant all the most relevant movies produced during the Cold War period by the American and Soviet cinematographic industries. Being the core of this final work, in the second chapter it is argued that movies are still today among the most valuable sources of knowledge to understand more comprehensively how the conflict was first created, and then propagated, by means of propaganda all over the world. Following this line of thought, cinema was among the most powerful weapons to conquer the hearts and minds of people globally during the 20th century. Images, such as the ones produced in movies, were formidable tools to shape the perception, and the profound understanding, of what the Cold War actually was. Being indisputably fundamental to win the Cold War struggle, both American and Soviet politicians and public opinion makers understood it was essential to influence the filmmaking process of their respective countries. Following this logic, movies became one of the most effective means through which it was possible to clarify the nature, or even create from scratch, what at that time had been perceived as a rather abstract, obscure, and unclear conflict. In a nutshell, cinema had the power to reify the existence of the Cold War to the eyes of the general public.

The third and last chapter focuses on the massive influence Cold War movies had on the American cinematic productions of the post-Cold War period. More precisely, if the Cold War had a massive influence on how American movies were made, in what they meant, and eventually how the general public interpreted them, the absence of such an epochal conflict must have had an equivalent, if not greater, impact. After the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, there was a significant change in the popular culture of American society and foreign policy. By always using movies as the main instrument of analysis, it is shown how post-Cold War movies reflected these mutations in American society and how, at the same time, these movies were massively influenced by the Cold War cultural heritage. The third chapter analyzes how American cinema evolved after the end of the Cold War. The demise of the Soviet Union left a void in the American collective that had to be filled. At the moment that the Cold War was over, the American cinematic apparatus found itself devoid of ideas. Hollywood capitalized on this conflict during the Cold War by basing much of its movies' plots on Cold War-related themes. As the conflict ended and America became the only global hegemon, much of the ideologies and certainties that characterized the Cold War era disappeared as the Berlin Wall. This chapter starts from this point, from Hollywood's exigency to find a new identitarian path. The evolution of American ideology is studied by looking at the evolution of superhero movies (such as Batman and Superman) and the spy genre (such as James Bond and Jason Bourne). These successful franchises were full of precious insights into how American society evolved since the end of the Cold War. By analyzing the most relevant American movies of the post-Cold War era, it is demonstrated how massive this conflict has been in influencing American society and its fears.

To conclude, the purpose of this final research is to unveil and comprehend the tight, and invisible connection, that bounded together history and politics on the one hand and culture, art and cinema on the other.