



The post-Soviet TV series “Hetaeras of Major Sokolov” as stylization to atmosphere of the Soviet cinema of the Stalinist time: white buildings, a lake, dapper and elegant Major Sokolov pretends to read a newspaper but observes the surrounding.

## MEMORIES OF THE WAR IN SOVIET AND RUSSIAN SPY CINEMA

# EVOLUTION OF TRAUMA

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### abstract

This paper analyzes Soviet and Russian spy films with respect to maintaining and transmitting memories of the Great Patriotic War (1941–1945) in popular culture. The new Russian post-Soviet cinema (after the 2000s) about the “war spies” is considered not only with regard to its entertainment and ideological functions, but also with regard to its function as a “post-memory” of the traumatic experiences of the war and the Nazi occupation. The new Russian cinema about espionage and spies reinterprets the issues of dependent people, Stalinist repressions, and traumatic memories that were absent in Soviet cinema.

**KEY WORDS:** Soviet cinema, post-Soviet cinema, spy genre, new Russian cinema, memory, trauma of the war

Soviet and post-Soviet Russian spy cinema is an almost completely unstudied phenomenon despite spy films being enormously popular in Soviet society and many of them continuing to have a cult following even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The blossoming of the spy genre was connected with the Cold War because the political situation of the Cold War stimulated the production of films devoted to the confrontation between two ideological systems embodied in the images of secret agents and spies. The spy genre was the most convenient format for conveying to the public the negative image of the “enemy” and the positive image of the subject (the secret agent or counter-spy) fighting this enemy. A common opinion in Soviet cultural critique was that the spies in these films were products primarily of Western mass culture

and that the spy detective was the “low”, mostly entertainment, genre that reflected the ideological opposition of the two superpowers of the Cold War and a desire to symbolically dominate the “enemy” through cinematic or literary devices. Despite the fact that Soviet theorists did not use the term “spy film” with regard to Soviet cinema production, the spy genre was alive and well at the time. The majority of these films could be categorized in the “war adventure” genre because they were substantively based on the events of the Second World War or on later events originating from the war (for example, the hunt for former Nazi collaborators or criminals). Thus, the first aspect of the Soviet spy films was that – in contrast to the Western spy films devoted to the conflict between the Soviet and Western intelligence services – the majority of the Soviet spy films were devoted to the conflict between the Soviet and German intelligence services during the Second World War when the war against the Nazis was understood as the fight against the “absolute Evil” on the side of the “absolute Good”.

Canonization of the memory about the Great Patriotic War (the Soviet term which referred to the struggle of the Soviet peoples against the German invasion of the 1941-1945) took significant place in the Soviet public memory, cultural mythology and cinema of different genres. It is important to remember here that the Soviet Union lost more than 27 million people, among them about 17 millions civilians, including Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Jews, Gypsies, and representatives of other nations and social groups who were killed in battles, in the Nazi concentration camps, during forced labor, and so on. This means that almost all Soviet families had relatives who perished in battle or during the Nazi occupation, and the majority of Soviet people understood the war not as a struggle for their freedom or the freedom of their country, but as a struggle for their survival as a people.

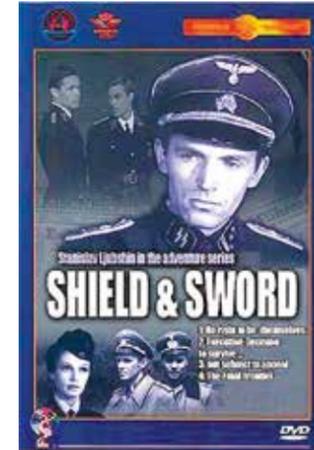
This memory about the brutal war and the difficult victory stimulated the production of hundreds of Soviet films about the war in different genres – epics, musicals, dramas, melodramas, and even comedies. The most widespread genre in Soviet cinema regarding the Great Patriotic War were the “combat films” about the Red Army and Soviet partisan’s struggles, “family dramas” (about the broken family connections during the war), and “romantic melodramas” about the loving wives and fiancées of the wartime heroes. But many aspects of the war remained invisible or little-known in official Soviet art, in particular the Red Army’s retreat of 1941–1942, Stalinist repressions, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, and the fate of Soviet prisoners of war who survived the Nazi concentration camps and their post-war fates after returning home. These were not prohibited in Soviet art, but they were not “welcome”. Thus the heroic pathos and suffering for the Motherland were the prevailing emotions in Soviet public art devoted to the war, while the personal or national traumas of the war were not embodied in many Soviet films. In particular, narratives of the Soviet victims of the concentration camps and ghettos and the post-war fate of the former prisoners of war after returning home were rarely seen in Soviet war cinema. The hypothesis behind this paper is that spy films re-

mained on the periphery of Soviet official attention as a “low” genre, and thus they had more opportunities to tell audiences about the issues that were not “welcome” in the canonical Soviet war genres. This is especially the case for post-Soviet Russian films that use Soviet cinematic visuality and canonical Soviet spy narratives as a background for the public memory and as a testimony to a bygone era, but re-interpreted by contemporary directors using today’s knowledge about the Soviet past.

The goal of this paper was to research the evolution of the cultural memory of the trauma of the war in Soviet and post-Soviet spy cinema, and I consider how the images of the secret agents were transformed from Soviet to contemporary Russian spy cinema. In this analysis, I use the ideas of French theorist Christian Metz<sup>1</sup> who considered cinema to be a phenomenon at the intersection of the cultural unconsciousness of a society colored by social symbolism and the personal “neuroses” of the filmmakers. Also, I use the concepts of Marianne Hirsch<sup>2</sup> and Catharine Merridale<sup>3</sup> regarding traumatic memory as a cultural phenomenon. Hirsch wrote about the traumatic memory of the Holocaust survivors who serve as the “post-memory” through photos, family stories, and movie images for the generations that did not experience the Holocaust. I extrapolated Hirsch’s ideas to the space of post-Soviet memory about the war and the Nazi occupation and consider cinema to be a “medium” that fixed the visual and emotional “collective memories” about the war trauma and transmitted this knowledge of the war to the Soviet generation’s children in the post-Soviet era. Merridale argued that the “trauma issue” was not popular in Soviet psychological thinking due to the ideological approach whereby people should be rehabilitated through work and by uniting individual emotions to the collective mind. Thus the concept of trauma only began to be discussed after the 1990s. As material for analyses, I chose the spy genre because I share the view of American scholar Lee Drummond<sup>4</sup> that the popular genres and their stories, which are the most widespread in many cultures, are the most useful for understanding the political and socio-cultural situation. “Auteur cinema” as a rule reflects the personal experiences of the director, but the most popular samples of national culture represent the “mythological base” of a society or the “inner idea” of the culture. Thus an analysis of the spy films will be helpful to understanding the “cultural models” of the Soviet and Russian subconscious.

### Traumatic memories of the war in early Soviet spy films

Although the first films on espionage were shot before the Second World War and were connected with Alfred Hitchcock’s achievements (*The Lady Vanishes*, 1938; *The 39 Steps*, 1935; *The Sabotage*, 1936; and *The Secret Agent*, 1936), the flourishing of the spy genre in Western countries was based on the actualization of the fundamental opposition of the Cold War, embodied in artistic images as the opposition of the “democratic West” and the “communist East” in the genres of nuclear thrillers and spy detectives. The main anti-heroes of the Western post-war movies on spies were the “Red agents” and terrorists from the “left



The Soviet TV series “Shield and Sword”, 1968. Actor Stanislav Liubshin in the main role of the Soviet agent “under cover”



The Soviet TV series “The Secret Agent’s Blunder”, 1968, actor Georgiy Zhzhenov in the main role of the Soviet agent.



Illustration to the Soviet TV series “Variant”Omega”, 1975, actor Oleg Dal’ in the main role of the Soviet agent “under cover”.

circle”<sup>5</sup>. A classic Western “spy genre” is considered with Ian Fleming’s novels and subsequent series of films about the fearless agent James Bond 007, saving the Western democratic values in the fight against “Red Moscow”.

The situation was quiet different in the Soviet cinema of the post-war years, where the ideological confrontation of the “communist” East against the “bourgeois” West was absent in the first Soviet post-war films. The first Soviet films on the “spy issue” can be classified as “war dramas” because they were devoted to the events of recent Soviet history and to the conflict between “Soviets” and “Nazis”. Those films reflected the post-war mood in Soviet society, especially the happiness of the end of the war and the Great Victory and the hope for a flourishing future after all of the sufferings during the war. The most representative Soviet spy film was *Secret Agent* (directed by B. Barnet, 1947), which was based on the story of the famous Soviet spy-saboteur Nikolai Kuznetsov, who operated in the territory of Western Ukraine during the Nazi occupation and who posed as a German lieutenant being all the time among German officers. The real Soviet agent Kuznetsov became widely known in post-war Soviet culture as the most successful Soviet diversionist and as the one who uncovered the German plans to launch a massive tank attack in the Kursk region (1943) and who passed secret information about Hitler’s plan to kill the heads of the USSR, US, and Great Britain during the Tehran Conference to the Soviet Intelligence Office. Kuznetsov was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union, the highest military honor. In the film, Kuznetsov performs many brave actions against the Nazis, such as kidnapping the German general and stealing the secret German codes, and the secret agent is depicted in the film as a fearless and honorable gentleman who even manages to be ironic in the face of the complacent and snobbish German officers. That first Soviet spy film combined the heroic pathos and drama in depicting the brave Soviet agent with comic elements in the

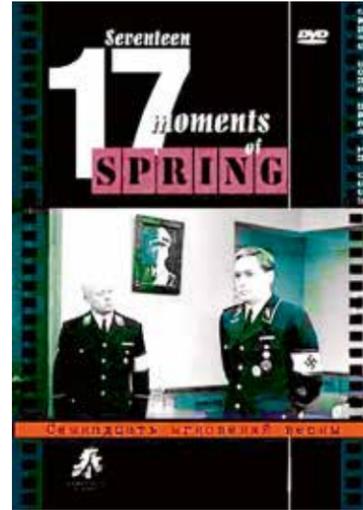
embodiment of the bat-eyed and self-conceited Germans; thus a demarcation between “us” and “enemies” was clearly depicted.

The film was enormously popular among Soviet audiences, and many expressions from the film became integral parts of Soviet mass culture (despite the tragic fate of the real Soviet agent who was the prototype for the film). I propose that this film with its strong optimistic pathos after the victory played a *psychotherapeutic role* in post-war Soviet society, which just a few years earlier had survived the millions of deaths and untold torment and indignity of the Soviet people during the brutal Nazi occupation. The happiness of the end of the war and the Great Victory and the popular belief in a flourishing future for all Soviet people had a strong influence on the Soviet public mood. Thus Soviet cinema of the first post-war decades did not want to focus the audience’s attention on the difficulties that accompanied the Soviet people’s path to the Great Victory – namely, the first few months of retreat, the ruthless Holocaust of the Soviet Jews, Gypsies, and disabled people in the Nazi-occupied territories, and the Stalinist repressions in the Red Army. Soviet post-war art instead sought to create an image of the Soviet people as a common body, as a great mythological hero who had defeated the most horrible of enemies, the Nazis and their collaborators.

During the war, Soviet film studios created many films devoted to the Nazi crimes towards the Soviet citizens, which served to stimulate the hatred of the Soviets for the Nazis (for example, the famous film *The Rainbow* (1943) depicting the Ukrainian woman Olena being tortured by Germans for being a partisan agent; *The Unconquered* (1943) devoted to the Holocaust and the anti-Nazi resistance of ordinary Ukrainians in Donbass; and *Zoya* (1944) depicting the story of the 17-year-old girl Zoya Kosmodemyanskaya who was tortured and executed by the Nazis for being a Soviet saboteur). Many Soviet people who survived the Nazi occupation or front-line battles knew about the Nazi atrocities not from the cinema, but because they saw them with



The post-Soviet film "In August of 1944", 2001, actors Evgeniy Mironov and Vlad Galkin in the main roles of the Soviet investigators from "SMERSH".



The Soviet TV series "17 Moments of Spring", 1973, actor Vyacheslav Tikhonov in the main role of the Soviet agent "under cover" (right) and actor Leonid Bronevoi in a role of head of Gestapo (left).

their own eyes, and after the war they looked for films that were able to take their minds off the emotional stress and the pain of their losses. The deep trauma resulting from the occupation and the war required psychological recovery, and according to the ideas of Dominick LaCapra,<sup>6</sup> historical trauma represented through visual art can create a distance between the subject of the trauma (the audience) and the traumatic experience. I believe that the early Soviet spy films performed this function of "recovery" through images of the almost mythological Soviet agents who could be victorious over any enemy, and these films represented the boundless belief in Soviet ideals and the heroics of the Soviet army and intelligence agencies. The influence of the common Soviet mass euphoria after the difficult victory over Nazism facilitated the creation of a distance between the feelings of the post-war Soviet society and the trauma of the Nazi occupation. As a rule, the Soviet agents of the early post-war time were references to the ideological concept of the "ideal Communist man", who sincerely believed in the Soviet regime and the Communist Party and who had no hesitations regarding his own ability to win against his enemies in any situation. If one uses Freudian terminology<sup>7</sup>, it was a kind of cultural *displacement* of the real memory of the brutal war with a *mythological memory* that was necessary at that post-war stage. In my opinion, the fearless Soviet agents were requested by the Soviet post-war audience because for many people they compensated for the deep sense of defenselessness, vulnerability, and humiliation that was experienced by the Soviet people who remained in the Nazi-occupied territories. Of course, not only spy films played the role of a *collective psychotherapy* for the post-war Soviet society, and many comedies and musicals played this role as well.

### Soviet spy films of the 1960s–1980s

The 1960s and 1970s were the "Golden era" for the spy genre, and most of the "classic" spy movies were created in that period. The majority of the Western spy detective films of the Cold War were shot in the "black-and-white" and "noir" mood, with a

focus on global treachery and suspicion between countries. The chronotope of the Western spy movies, in accordance with the opinion of A. Hepburn,<sup>8</sup> can be described by the words "concealment", "loneliness", and "fear". In my opinion, the famous British film *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963), which was based on John Le Carre's bestselling book about the British agent who was betrayed by his own commanders, is one of most representative Western films on the poetics of the Cold War.

In the poetics of the Soviet spy films, the majority of the films were shot in the genre of heroic or romantic war adventures where smart and enthusiastic Soviet spies struggled against German counter-intelligence operatives during the Great Patriotic War. The most famous Soviet spy films of that time – *Far From Home* (1960), *Saturn Is Almost Invisible* (1967–1972), *Major Whirlwind* (1967), *The Dead Season* (1968), *Shield and Sword* (1968), *The Secret Agent's Blunder* (1968), *Fate of Resident* (1970), *Seventeen Moments of Spring* (1973), *Variant Omega* (1975), *Where Have You Been, Odysseus?* (1978), etc., were devoted to or closely connected with the history of the Great Patriotic War. The majority of these films and TV series were created on the basis of real stories from the Soviet agents' lives. Many of the films were shot during the period known as the "Ottepel" (Thaw) in the Soviet Union, when political and literary censure was liberalized and many political inmates of the Gulag were released. Many sensitive topics became more open and accepted in Soviet popular culture, for example, the issue of Soviet prisoners of war, many of whom were suspected of treason and collaborating with the Nazis and were sent to the Gulag<sup>9</sup>. Some war dramas about the Soviet captives were censured and were only publically screened much later (for example, the film *Trial on the Road* was shot in 1971 but only saw wide circulation after 1985). The spy film was the first genre where Soviet state liberalization towards the intelligentsia was obvious. It is a well-known point that the Soviet Union was declared as the state "of workers and peasants" where liberal intellectuals and creative intelligentsia were marginalized in the Soviet public discourses because of their class origin. This was

reflected in the unarticulated social hierarchies of the positive and negative personages in Soviet art. However, the situation evolved after the war, and these changes were reflected in Soviet spy cinema as well. For example, the main helpers of the Soviet Resident in Berlin of 1945 in the cult Soviet TV series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* were a courageous German pastor (who was imprisoned by the Nazis for being pacifist) and a German university professor (who also survived the Nazi concentration camps). The novelty was that this was the first time a priest was depicted in Soviet cinema as an absolutely positive personage and as a resistor against the Nazis. One must remember that thousands of Christian priests and representatives of other religious confessions were repressed by the Soviet state and became the objects of Soviet satire before the war. Scientists and liberal intelligentsia were repressed by the Soviet state as well, and many of them were sent to so called "sharashka", the secret scientific research institutes and engineering bureaus that had been created by the NKVD at the end of the 1920s<sup>10</sup>. The liberalization of the Soviet state's attitude to the religious and "class alien" representatives and pre-revolutionary intelligentsia started during the war, but the image of the honest, brave, smart, and resolute clergyman was a very new one in Soviet popular culture. Of course, the German priest in that movie was a clear allusion to the thousands of Soviet citizens who demonstrated their patriotism during the war but remained priests or believers. Thus it was a step toward restoring cultural justice for certain categories of Soviet citizens.

Another novelty of the Soviet spy films emerged in the construction of the public memory about the Germans during the war, and if the Soviet combat movies and the war melodramas de-personalized the Germans as symbols of the ontologically evil, faceless, and inhuman Nazis, then the Soviet spy films had a strong tendency for individualization of the enemies. As stipulated by the specifics of the genre, the "spy game" was typically a duel between a Soviet agent and a German officer from the German intelligence service or Gestapo (for example, in the TV series *Seventeen Moments of Spring* or in the film *Shield and Sword*). The Soviet spy films presented the differences between the Gestapo officers who were depicted as "butchers", as stupid and sadistic executioners, and the German intelligence officials who were often portrayed in the Soviet spy movies as intellectuals, sometimes even more dangerous, but sometimes as representatives of the humanistic perspective and as opponents of Hitlerism (for example, in the famous TV series *Variant Omega* and *Where Have You Been, Odysseus?*). Some Soviet films depicted the "suffering Germans" who became Nazi spies against their will and who were violated by the Nazis. For example, the film *Shield and Sword* depicted a female German agent who was forced to have an abortion so that her child would not distract her from her job as a spy, and in *Seventeen Moments of Spring* the female Soviet radio operator was discovered by the Gestapo because she cried out in Russian during her childbearing. The theme of women's sexuality and maternity in the Soviet spy films accentuated the vulnerability of the secret agents and added such little-known war realities to the public memory.

Another popular Soviet spy detective demonstrated the trans-

formation of the state attitude to the Civil War of 1918–1922 in Russia and to the former White Russian officers who emigrated from Soviet Russia just after the Bolsheviks' victory. Traditionally, the representatives of the White Russian emigration were suspected of cooperating with Western intelligence agencies. The Soviet spy TV series *The Secret Agent's Blunder* (V. Dorman, 1968), *The Fate of the Resident* (V. Dorman, 1970), *Returning the Resident* (V. Dorman, 1982) and *The End of Operation Resident* (V. Dorman, 1986) are of interest as vivid samples of including the Russian emigrants in the Soviet public memory. Thus, Soviet spy cinema tried to reconsider not only the trauma of the Great Patriotic War, but also the traumatic memory of the October Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent Civil War in Russia.

Another influential film was that about the former emigrant Tulyev, a Russian nobleman and professional Russian secret service officer, who came over to the Soviet counter-espionage service from a Western spy agency. The image of Tulyev, transforming from an enemy of the Soviet state to a loyal Soviet officer of the intelligence corps, reflected the realities of the war when hundreds of Russian emigrants struggled against the Nazis in the European resistance in Spain, Italy, and France because they wanted to help their native homeland. Thus, these films were not only about the battle between the Western and the Soviet secret services, but more about the relations of the Soviet state and their former opponents both inside and outside the USSR. In addition to its ideological influence, the image of the converted Soviet agent Tulyev was extremely successful with the Soviet audience because many Soviet spectators felt the "hidden" senses of the films. These were films not about love of the Russian emigrants towards the Soviet intelligence service, but about the dramatic fate of a person who had survived the difficulties faced by the Russian intelligentsia in the twentieth century. Even more, that film was one of the first to refer not to "Soviet" but to "Russian" patriotism at a time when the question of national identity and the different national experiences of the war were not discussed in public.

Another important aspect of the popularity of spy films was that Soviet films about intelligence officers were considered by many Soviet viewers to be a "textbook" for how the state power functioned. Despite the traditional point of view that Soviet intelligence was the most secret area in the state, many Soviet spy films lifted the veil of "working relations" in the intelligence corps and even half-exposed some professional secrets. For example, the films *Returning the Resident* and *The End of Operation Resident* showed the methods of recruiting informants and agents among civilians, the principles behind the verification of agents who "returned from the cold", and the "lie detector" procedure for the first time. The film *The End of Operation Resident* gave a detailed typology of the Soviet "traitors" who wanted to co-operate with Western intelligence because of moral weakness, love of money, or having collaborated with the Nazis in the past. Also, the film *The End of Operation Resident* depicted the spy games around the Soviet physicist Nesterov with clear allusions to the figure of the famous Soviet "father of hydrogenous bomb" Andrei Sakharov during his exile in Gorky. That film

caused quite the sensation because the topics of Soviet nuclear physicists and Soviet dissidents were mostly absent and highly censored in Soviet popular culture, and this was the first and only time the themes were presented in Soviet cinema. Thus, some of the themes from Soviet political and social life that were taboo in other films were presented in the spy films. A simple explanation for this is that it was a requirement of the genre. The more complicated explanation is that spy films were usually supervised by faceless colonels from the KGB whose names were not indicated in the titles. The result of such supervision was that the usual censorship by the Ministry of Culture could be skipped because the KGB representatives wanted to present their jobs as credibly and professionally as possible on screen. There is a legend from the Cold War that the intelligence officers of all involved countries watched the spy films that were made by their opponents in order to unravel some of their opponents' secrets and their methods.

The Stalinist repressions were not presented in Soviet spy films because the majority of the films and TV series were created at the request of the KGB and were intended to give a positive image of the organization. Despite the hidden propaganda of the genre, it was enormously popular with the Soviet audience, and films were made by talented directors who wanted to tell about the difficulties of making moral choices within a "system" in which one's life was at risk. Soviet composers wrote romantic melodies for the films, and these became symbols of the era. The Soviet actors embodied the images of the Soviet agents who were tall, slender, handsome, intelligent, and elegant men in well-tailored dark suits and who always, despite the risks to their lives, showed self-control, fortune, and wisdom. The paradox of Soviet culture was, for example, that the Soviet actor Georgiy Zhzhenov, who played Tulyev in the TV series *The Secret Agent's Blunder*, was repressed before the war and spent more than twelve years in Siberian camps and in exile. After his release in the 1950s, he returned to Moscow and became one of the most popular Soviet actors. He lived to be ninety (1915–2005) and was awarded the State Prize of the Russian Federation named after the Vasilyev brothers, he was given the title "People's Artist of the Soviet Union" (the highest award in the USSR for actors), and he received special awards from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB along with many other decorations. He played Soviet secret agents, American senators, Soviet war commanders of the highest rank, and other strong-willed men until his death, and one can only guess how his personal experience of repressions helped him in his acting roles. Using Freudian terminology, we can describe this cultural work as the "sublimation" of trauma.

### Verbalizing the trauma in the post-Soviet cinema on the war

A new understanding of the Great Patriotic War developed after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. The poetics and conflicts of the post-Soviet war films were changing, and there were openings for new topics and characters. In the early 1990s, Russian society was becoming more interested in crime stories

than spy stories. However, since the early 2000s post-Soviet Russian society has begun to feel more interested in the Great Patriotic War again, and thus the war has continued to be one of the strongest influences in constructing the national identity in post-Soviet Russia. The 1990s and the 2000s were a time of intense debates about the Soviet past, including the Stalinist repressions and the role of Stalin in Soviet history, the Great Patriotic War, and the victims and heroes of that war, and all of these themes were reflected in the cinema. Many Russian filmmakers returned to the spy plots from the Great Patriotic War (and the Cold War) for the following reasons: it is the most discussable and the most interesting time period for their audiences; it was a dramatic time of cultural and political contrasts that are highly suitable for cinematic embodiment; it was the time when traditions of the Soviet spy genre were created; the spy films have remained the most convenient matrix to create the dynamic and adventurous plots beloved by any audience; and it was the most traumatic time for the Soviet people, and this trauma has not been fully articulated until today. The American scholar D. Youngblood wrote<sup>11</sup> that the new post-Soviet Russian films on the Great Patriotic War prefer depicting the "Good War" from the classic Soviet traditions because the post-Soviet audience has nostalgia for a simple demarcation line between "us" and the "enemy", and this feeling is similar to the love of American viewers for the American gangster or noir cinema of the 1940–1960s. It seems that this fact is of an even more complicated character because many commentators on Russian web forums express the opinion that Soviet culture has created many cinematic masterpieces that cannot be surpassed by contemporary directors in terms of dramatic expression, talent of actors, and aesthetic perfection. This might be compared with the concept of "retrotopia" from Zygmunt Bauman<sup>12</sup> whereby people tend to idealize the past more than a better future (because the future is always unpredictable). Thus, a large part of the post-Soviet audience loves the Soviet cinema for its "atmosphere" and for the authenticity of the films regarding these bygone eras.

Russian filmmakers do not dispute the nostalgia of some viewers for the Soviet classics, and they approach Soviet cinema as postmodernists; they use the Soviet plots or cinema aesthetics of the 1950s–1980s but rethink them in the context of new knowledge and new challenges of the time. This means that speaking about the events of the Great Patriotic War in the new Russian cinema has included themes that it would have been impossible to speak about in the Soviet past, including the Gulag, Stalin's repressions, famine in Ukraine, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, nationalists and Nazi collaborators in Ukraine and the Baltic states, the cruelty of the NKVD against its own agents, and using people against their will in espionage games. On the one hand, such a multifaceted image of Soviet history makes it possible to more clearly ascertain the complex era in which Soviet spies and counter-intelligence agents had to operate. On the other hand, such an approach places the trauma of war in the space of numerous and competing traumas of the past. While Soviet public memory considered the Great Patriotic War to be the main trauma of history, post-Soviet society prefers to depict the

plurality of the traumatic experiences in Soviet society.

How does this multiplicity of traumas work in the contemporary spy films? Since the 2000s, Russian film studios have created dozens of spy films and TV series devoted to the period of the Great Patriotic War. I will focus on several that are the most representative and popular, in my opinion. In particular is the film *In August of 1944* (director M. Ptashuk, 2001), which depicts a counter-espionage operation in Western Belarus conducted by "SMERSH" (which was an acronym for "Death to Spies!" and was the name of the super-secret Soviet counter-espionage department (1943–1946) that had wide authority to conduct its operations). The film was shot in a realistic "black-and-white" style that harkened back to the Soviet war epic cinema of the 1960s–1970s and depicted very tired but highly qualified officers who used the smallest clues in the forest or in cities to identify the dangerous undercover German diversionists and spies. The sensation of the film was that it was the first depiction of the hard and exhausting work of SMERSH agents on screen. The historical background in which the SMERSH agents operated was presented in that film, namely that members of all Soviet armed service branches did not like and were afraid of SMERSH agents because they knew of their broad authorities; the command pressured the agents and did not trust them; the agents were forced to interact with the Belarusian and Polish population, many of whom supported the local nationalists and hated the Soviet power; and the agents risked their lives and their careers at every moment because if they did not produce the desirable results quickly enough they could be repressed as well. The trauma of the war in the film was shown through images that were absent in Soviet cinema – the post-war distrust of each other and denunciations in the liberated villages and cities, poverty, fear, crippled locals who survived the Nazi occupation (a one-armed child and an invalid), and the German collaborators who hid in the woods and kept the natives at bay. It is important to note that Soviet cinema did not create a tradition of depicting the everyday life, survival, and conflicts of Soviet people in the Nazi occupied and Soviet-liberated territories, but this film devoted a lot of time to portraying the everyday life and conflicts of locals in the recently liberated lands. The bitter sides of the Soviet war reality were not idealized in the film, but positive feelings were generated by the fact that the agents were depicted as honest professionals who performed their dirty and hard work as selfless servants who understood that their work would end the war faster and save countless lives.

The TV series *The Apostle* (Y. Moroz, N. Lebedev, G. Sidorov, 2008) has a much darker mood and a more naturalistic depiction of the struggle of Soviet intelligence against the German sabotage school and its head. The series developed several discourses that were not previously represented in Soviet spy films – including the issue of "dependent" people who were used by intelligence agencies and who were forced to be involved in the "spy games", the wide national and social panorama of Soviet society and anti-Soviet moods as a result of the Stalinist repressions and national ambitions, the sexual harassment and women's vulnerability during the war, the immorality and even sadistic methods of



The post-Soviet TV series "Apostle", 2008, actor Evgeniy Mironov as the double agent.

The post-Soviet TV series "Hetaeras of Major Sokolov", 2014, actor Andrei Panin in the main role.

both the German and Soviet secret police, the severity of the NKVD against own citizens and even its own agents, the suffering of ordinary people from the Stalinist and Nazi regimes, and the impossibility to resist against totalitarian power. A very new theme in film was the reference to the Polish army of general Anders and to the Holocaust, and one of the episodes presented a discourse of the Jews being used as a test for humanity. One of the hidden messages of the series was that becoming a spy requires one to develop cynicism and distrust towards everybody, to be ruthless toward oneself, and to be emotionally cold and pragmatic. Such emotions were absent in Soviet spy films, which were more romantic and idealistic in depicting Soviet agents and their jobs. The trauma of war in the series includes the brutality of not only Germans, but also of the Soviet regime, which was a novelty for Russian cinema. Knowledge of the pre-war Stalinist repressions was widespread in post-Soviet society, but it was hardly accepted in Russian public memory. Another specificity was that the new Russian spy cinema split the image of "hostility", which was moving from the "Germans" as the "main enemy" of the Soviets during the war to the images of "inner hostility" – the NKVD police and their envoys. The defenselessness of the agent symbolizes the vulnerability of any person in the face of a state machine. The trauma of war was intertwined with the trauma of system pressure in that series.

Another indicative work in this genre is the TV series *Hetaeras of Major Sokolov* (B. Khudojnazarov, 2014), which is devoted to the fates of the women in the intelligence and counter-intelligence services. The theme of female agents at the center of the plot was new for post-Soviet cinema – typically women were depicted in Soviet spy films as victims, helpers of Soviet agents, or as the male protagonist's lover. The plot of the TV series developed around training young girls as saboteurs who could, if the order came, kill the enemy with no compunctions or lure the enemy to bed or endure any torture if the mission failed. An experienced intelligence officer selects the girls for this school

according to certain requirements – not just because they are beautiful and hardy, but also because they have skills in shooting or operating radios, patriotism, and *some vulnerability* in their personal past. The latter criterion symbolically demonstrates the categories of Soviet citizens who were most vulnerable in the pre-war period and who could be used by the NKVD – one of the girls was an orphan, the second was Jewish with experience of anti-Semitism, the third was Ukrainian who had survived the famine, the fourth was from a repressed family of pre-Revolution aristocrats, and the fifth was a former thief and prostitute who was ready to carry out any orders under the threat of separation from her young daughter. The series shows the dark side of the agent's life, which destroys the female soul – all of the girls are young, romantic, and dream of love and motherhood, but according to the needs of the war the girls are taught to kill, to lie, to manipulate, and to remain loyal to the state and their supervisor in any situation. The series presents the very dramatic and cynical requirements of the espionage job, which requires the selfless service of the spy.

Of course, if the films above were devoted to narrating only about the national or social trauma, they would not be spy detectives. In reality, the analyzed films and TV series have issues of “trauma” only as a “hidden” discourse, but they have all the properties needed for a high-quality spy film at the external level, including dynamic adventure and intrigue, unexpected plot twists with double and triple spies and disguises, fatal and romantic love, gunfights, chases, mutual suspicions, and a heart-breaking epilogue. Post-Soviet cinema makes allusions to Soviet cinema in the creation of the cinematic “atmosphere” of that time, the atmosphere of public joyfulness, poetic optimism, and romantic energy, which were authentic for the pre-war Soviet cinema moods, but were artificially reproduced as the background for the spy plots in some Russian films after the 2000s.

## Conclusions

To sum up, we can see that Soviet spy films presented the Soviet agents as the most worthy representatives of the Soviet people and the Soviet intelligence corps, but the post-Soviet Russian spy films pictured various images of the Soviet agents who were patriots of their homeland and victims of the state at the same time. The heterogeneous and conflicting identities of the spies in the new Russian cinema reflect contemporary knowledge about the Stalinist crimes, the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, the brutality of the NKVD, and many other topics that were not welcome in Soviet spy movies. I believe that picturing these traumatic issues in contemporary Russian spy cinema symbolizes the liberalization of the post-Soviet memory. The Soviet people who have been deprived of the opportunity to articulate their experience of trauma in the public Soviet memory (such as former prisoners of war, repressed people, and Holocaust survivors) find they can do so through the spy genre.

Post-Soviet cinema demonstrates the polyphony of the reality of war, which is not limited to the confrontation between the Germans and the Soviets, but includes the conflicts between the different interests and backgrounds of people living in Soviet ter-

ritories and the multiplicity of traumas that originated from the Russian Civil War and Stalinist crimes. Soviet spy films accented the opposition of the Soviet agents and the German intelligence or the Gestapo, but paid little attention to the difficulties of ordinary Soviets during the German occupation and those who took extreme risks helping the Soviet people behind German lines. The new Russian spy films are more tragic, and the figure of the spy in post-Soviet cinema is embodied in metaphorical form in the contradictions that existed in Soviet society. In reality, the image of the secret agent in a hostile environment can be understood as a metaphor for the vulnerability of any person during war or in the face of the state machine. In analyzing the evolution of memory about the war in post-Soviet spy cinema, one can see that the concept of “collective” trauma was diverging, and the films have tried to articulate the “competing” traumas of the people who had different national and social experiences or who were in opposition to the Soviet authorities and who have remained “invisible” in Soviet cinema. However, even though contemporary Russian cinema articulates the multiplicity of pre-war Soviet traumas, it still accents the Great Patriotic War as the event that motivated different groups of Soviet people to unify and save their homeland despite their personal and political differences. ✖

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