

## IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTS IN THE CINEMATOGRAPHY OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD

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**Abstract:** *The paper investigates the process of becoming of the ideologization of cinematic art in the period between the two World Wars. The author traces the emergence of new ways of translating political concepts into cinema, their golden age and disappearance. Based on a wide range of archival, audio and video visual sources, memoirs and reference books, an attempt is made to outline the evolution of technological methods of control and manipulation of public consciousness. The geographical representativeness of the study covers Soviet, European, and American cinema, a description of dramaturgic methods is given, which are used to create a "frame structure" of the political consciousness of citizens and such fundamental categories of it as "common historical memory", "homeland", "national dream" and "national perspective". In the study, the author concludes that the cinema of the interwar period gradually acquires the features of systemic political communication between the state and society and, thanks to the multi-channel nature of individual perception, becomes the main tool for the formation of national identity. The actualization of the study of the claimed topic lies in the field of studying the patterns of appearance, principles and target settings of modern technologies of mass culture, public relations, marketing, etc.*

**Keywords:** political communication, interwar cinematography, dramatic techniques, national identity, historical memory.

After World War I, both the victorious countries (Entente) and the defeated states (Triple Alliance) urgently needed new and efficient political communications between the state and society. The power elites were preoccupied with the problem of quickly stopping social cataclysms (revolutions, liberation wars), stabilizing the post-war world order and civil pacification of the population within the borders of national states. The old cultural and political channels of communication between the

government and society – the media, theater, literature, ballet<sup>1</sup>, painting and sculpture<sup>2</sup>, – according to the researchers, could not cope with the increased burden of transmitting ideological concepts from the state to the individual, leaving the latter's consciousness with a blanket field for their own social experience<sup>3,4</sup>.

By 1918, the literacy rate in Germany was only 72%, in Austria-Hungary – 59%, in France – 55%, in the UK – 76% and in the former Russian Empire – only 27% of the total able-bodied population<sup>5</sup>. For newspapers and literature of all genres, this was an insurmountable obstacle in reaching the population with information. Theater, ballet, painting, and sculpture in the post-war world continued to remain the narrow class entertainment of educated intellectuals<sup>6</sup>. In the arsenal of the ruling elites there was only cinematography. Cinema revolutionized the culture of audience's perception. Previously, static images of the surrounding world appeared to a person in motion and gave rise to a new (“barrier-free”) method of reflection. “A kiss – montage – a baby” and no need to wait for toxicosis or long pregnancy – a happy mother with a baby appeared on the screen<sup>7</sup>.

Cinematic time shrank to the scale of “here and now”, because any narrative could become a slogan – a guide to action or a “brick” in building the foundation of an individual worldview<sup>8</sup>. Cinematography is a syncretic genre. The reality of the screen affected several centers of reality perception simultaneously, making a person not just a spectator, but a subject of empathy of the plot twists and turns. Such an illusion of

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<sup>1</sup> T. Portnova, “Genre and style interaction in solutions staged ballets of the nineteenth, twentieth centuries”, in *Astra Salvensis*, vol. 6, no. 12, 2018, p. 689-694.

<sup>2</sup> T. V. Portnova, “Principles and opportunities of the study of pictorial heritage in the practice of choreographic education”, in *Journal of Siberian Federal University-Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 11, no. 12, 2018, p. 2043-2055.

<sup>3</sup> E. S. Senyavskaya, A. S. Senyavsky, L. V. Zhukova, *Man and front-line everyday life in the wars of Russia in the 20th century*, Moscow, Institute of Russian History, 2017; T. Filippova, P. Baratov, *Enemies of Russia. Images and rhetoric of hostility in the Russian journal satire of the First World War*, Moscow, AIRO-XXI, 2014; A. G. Kolesnikova, “The image of the enemy in Soviet cinema”, in *Sowing*, vol. 9, no. 1548, 2006, p. 24-30.

<sup>4</sup> R. Dodonov, “The institutionalization of the politics of memory”, in *Skbid*, vol. 1, no. 153, 2018, p. 98-102. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.21847/1728-9343.2018.1\(153\).127537](http://dx.doi.org/10.21847/1728-9343.2018.1(153).127537)

<sup>5</sup> O. V. Voronova, *Soviet Cinema: on the history of the organization of cinematography in Russia (1925-1930)*, Moscow, CeRo, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> Z. Slavoj, *Like a thief in broad daylight: power in the era of post-human capitalism*, Princeton, Seven Stories Press, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

complicity, according to the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek, generated in the viewer the confidence of the existing ontological meanings of life, justified their past, present and future, creating a common historical memory, a national dream and a joint perspective of future life (a national idea)<sup>9</sup>. It was the cinema of the first half of the 20th century which, due to its specific qualities, became the main political communicator between society and the state. Ever since the Lumiere brothers, the development of the “motion picture” has been continuously accompanied by ideological saturation. Cinematography, therefore, is recognized as art, that any motion picture carries an author’s (director’s) reflection, that is, a reflection of reality passed through social experience, moral criteria, political beliefs, aesthetic, ethical ideals, etc. In other words, this is the sublimated worldview of the director, splashed onto the screen<sup>10</sup>.

The ideological concept of the film in the “society – state” paradigm is political communication of power, which models national consciousness per the existing external and internal political challenges<sup>11</sup>. The ways of transmitting power political signals to citizens – consumers of film products – were improved along with film production technologies: from a static camera to dialectical montage, from a magnetic sound track to multi-channel digital recording and from a brush-painted flag on the Potemkin battleship to modern computer generated images. The implantation of an ideological concept into the dramaturgy of the motion picture went a vexatious path: from the frontal black-and-white image of the character in the “friend or foe” algorithm, to the creation of complex worldview images, where the finest motion picture directing tools are used to impose upon the domestic audience the contempt of foreign culture and lifestyle. Accordingly, the relevance of the study and its practical significance lies in the systematization of expert knowledge that determines the quality of modern ideological concepts implanted in the dramaturgy of motion pictures that can carry both destructive and constructive messages of national identity and

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> B. M. Aitbayeva, B. A. Rakhmetova, A. M. Maulenova, Z. B. Akhmetzhanova, A. C. Smailova, B. C. Rahimov, “Functions of expressive facilities in heroic epos”, in *Ponte*, vol. 73, no. 10, 2017, p. 43-47.

<sup>11</sup> T. Portnova, “Artistic heritage of V. Nijinsky”, in *Information (Japan)*, vol. 20, no. 7, 2017, p. 4775-4782.

culture of the native country<sup>12</sup>. The main purpose of this paper is to explore the mechanism of conveying ideological concepts in the dramaturgy of motion pictures of the interwar period (1918-1939) in the existing “society – state” paradigm. The aims of the study, which for a long time were left out of the spotlight of cinematography historians, are briefly as follows:

- increased expectations of power elites from the “ideological implantation” of national cinematography products;
- the main methods of implanting an ideological concept into the production chain of a motion picture (dramatized screenplay – director’s script – principal photography – montage – premiere/theatrical distribution – critics and viewers rating);
- the efficiency of creating and conveying an ideological concept through a motion picture as a response to the challenge (irritant) of domestic and foreign policy;
- long-term and short-term ideological “injections” in wide release motion pictures;
- direct and indirect conveyance of the ideological concept into the cinema of the USSR and Western countries (Europe, USA).

### **Literature review**

A source study base was formed by the digitized and unrestricted access audio and video materials on the history of European, American, and Soviet cinema in the interwar period. Memoirs of directors, actors, producers of motion picture companies, and government officials responsible for the development of domestic cinematography were also used in this study. Indirect sources are also used in the paper – links to archival collections located in the author’s studies delimited by discourse from our subject – “the image of the enemy in the cinematography of Europe and the USSR at the brink of World War II” and “education of civil patriotism based on examples of historical cinematography in the USSR”, etc.

The problem of ideological concepts in the dramaturgy of motion pictures of the interwar period directly and indirectly interested many cinematography historians, critics, philosophers, and sociopsychologists. Therefore, a review of literature on the subject matter can be safely

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<sup>12</sup> K. Nurgali, K. Assanov, G. Shashkina, M. Zhumabekov, F. Kultursynova, “The concept of dionysism in the legacy of Friedrich Nietzsche and Vyacheslav Ivanov”, in *European Journal of Science and Theology*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2018, p. 99-108.

marked in accordance with particular authors' accents upon considering the conveyance of a powerful ideology through the dramaturgic canvas of motion picture scripts and/or plots. The first studies on the content of ideological concepts in the dramaturgy of motion pictures of the interwar period appeared in Russian periodicals in the 1990s. They were journalistic in nature and were designed for the general reader. For obvious reasons, there were no comprehensive purely scientific studies of this subject in the Soviet Union. The cinematographer, Secretary of the Union of Cinematographers of the USSR Grigory Maryamov and Doctor of Art History Rostislav Yurenev became the authors of the first serious monographic studies on how to ideologize Soviet cinema in the interwar Stalin five-year plans<sup>13</sup>. They fairly believed that the origins of the ideological concept – the search and fragmented delineation of the image of the enemy, counterrevolutionary and disruptor – in Soviet cinematography lie in the general theoretical Stalinist position that the construction of socialism in a particular country is to be accompanied by increased resistance of the classes that lost power in the course of the revolution. The first concise directive of Stalin that the documentary picture of the Shakhty Trial, about the show trial of 53 leaders of the Donugol trust, should become part of the public domain for all the working people of the country, was received by the chairman of Soyuzkino Boris Shumyatsky on November 28, 1930<sup>14</sup>. This date can mark the beginning of “manual control” of the ideological content of all theatrical products of Soviet cinematography personally by Stalin.

However, the public procurement of two documentaries on disruptors-specialists was quickly aborted after the leader watched the country's first voiced video chronicle. The synchronization of sound and image was far from perfect; therefore, the decision was made to limit the number of copies and leave the motion picture as a teaching aid for security officers<sup>15</sup>. The first sound motion picture of the Soviet theatrical release was the feature film “Road to life” directed by Nikolai Ekka, which premiered on June 1, 1931 in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. The evil and cruel leader of the thieves' gang Zhigan is depicted in the plot history not as an enemy of any particular and concrete person, but as an adversary of the common “noble idea” – the socialist future of the entire Soviet nation<sup>16</sup>. All the images in the

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<sup>13</sup> G. B. Maryamov, *Kremlin censor. Stalin is watching a movie*, Moscow, Kinotsentr, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> B. Shumyatsky, *Cinema of millions*, Moscow, Kinofotoizdat, 1935.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> G. K. Ashin, A. P. Midler, *In the grip of spiritual oppression*, Moscow, Mysl, 1986.

“Road...”, according to the philosopher Gennady Ashin and publicist Alexander Midler, “were carved out clumsily...”. Negative characters were endowed with greed, lust, and cruelty with a complete lack of flexibility of mind. The positive ones were kind, sacrificial, honest, but naive and helpless<sup>17</sup>. Over the next two years, Soviet directors and scriptwriters began to intensely calque such characters on the screen. The reaction followed at once. According to the memoirs of the head of Sovkino, Adrian Piotrovsky, after watching the films “My Motherland”, directed by Vsevolod Pudovkin, “At the Far Outpost” by Evgeny Brunchugin, “My Homeland” by Alexander Zarkhi and Iosif Kheifits at the same time, Stalin summoned Andrei Zhdanov and severely reprimanded him. “These pictures were made by the wrong hands with money of the people”, – the leader summed up, and all the tapes were immediately banned from theaters<sup>18</sup>.

The era of “straightforward screen caricatures” of the external and internal enemies of the people quickly ended after Zarkhi and Kheifits were almost sent to the concentration camp (they managed to rehabilitate themselves with the films “Baltic Deputy” and “Member of the Government”)<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, modern cinematography historians believe that the increased expectations of the Soviet government regarding the effectiveness of the influence of an ideological power concept on the mass audience through cinematography were justified<sup>20</sup>. In the interwar period, the Soviet motion picture industry, according to cautious statistics of Western researchers, created more than 1.200 motion pictures of various genres, of which only 67 were banned from theatrical distribution<sup>21</sup>.

However, many problems of ideological work in Soviet cinematography remained unresolved due to the imperfection of

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> A. Piotrovsky, *Theater. Movie. Life*, Leningrad, Iskusstvo, 1969.

<sup>19</sup> A. Chirkov, *Essays on the drama of films*, Moscow, Goskinoizdat, 1939.

<sup>20</sup> A. V. Golubev, *If the world falls upon our Republic: Soviet society and the external threat in the 1920-1940s*, Moscow, Kuchkovo Pole, 2008; O. A. Nesterchuk, “Dangerous content as a technology for covert control of mass consciousness and behavior in modern conditions”, in *Security of Eurasia*, vol. 2, no. 46, 2018, p. 117-122; E. Ya. Margolit, “As in a mirror: Germany in Soviet feature films between the 1920s and 1930s”, in *Cinema Notes*, no. 59, 2002, p. 61-80; A. A. Dolgikh, “Modification of a film image of zombie in modern philosophy”, in *Tomsk State Pedagogical University Bulletin*, vol. 5, no. 133, 2013, p. 34-37

<sup>21</sup> A. A. Dolgikh, *Strategies of ideologization and deideologization in the philosophy of cinema*, Tomsk, TSPU, 2015; E. G. Lemberg, *The economy of Soviet cinematography*, Moscow, Teakinopechat, 1930.

production technologies. The motion picture industry of the Soviet Union could not promptly respond to the constant changes of foreign and domestic policy of the USSR government. Many motion picture critics fairly believe that such asynchrony was least of all connected with the “modular nature of the filming process” (dramatized screenplay – director’s script – casting – principal photography – editing and dubbing), which stretched over time. The main reason for the inhibition of the implantation of imperious ideological concepts into cinematography was the “inability of the directors to quickly reflect on the political situation in the country and abroad”<sup>22</sup>. Even within the period from 1918 to 1941 did the political concept of the “external image” of Germany change three times: from positive (the times of the Weimar Republic) to negative (the rise to power of the Nazis) and again the positive image of an ally after the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact at the brink of the war<sup>23</sup>. Accordingly, the ideological concept was fidgeting around the “target setting of ideologists”<sup>24</sup>. During the same time, the mainstream foreign policy of the USSR cinematography changed twice towards fascist Italy, and once – towards France, Great Britain, and the USA<sup>25</sup>.

Professor Vardan Baghdasaryan, film historian Eugene Margolit and some other modern authors<sup>26</sup> fairly believe that, starting in the late 1930s, the Soviet leadership changed the strategy of implanting ideological concepts into the socialist cinematography to a more effective one. The center of gravity of “political influence” was transferred from

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<sup>22</sup> “Cinema and culture”, in *Materials of the “Round Table”. Questions of Philosophy*, no. 3, 1990, p. 29-37. Available at: <https://www.twirpx.com/file/2594112/>; E. S. Senyavskaya, *Opponents of Russia in the wars of the XX century: the evolution of the “image of the enemy” in the minds of the army and society*, Moscow, Rossiyskaya Politicheskaya Entsiklopediya, 2006.

<sup>23</sup> “Cinema and culture”, in *Materials of the “Round Table”. Questions of Philosophy*, no. 3, 1990, p. 29-37. Available at: <https://www.twirpx.com/file/2594112/>.

<sup>24</sup> E. S. Senyavskaya, *Opponents of Russia in the wars of the XX century: the evolution of the “image of the enemy” in the minds of the army and society*, Moscow, Rossiyskaya Politicheskaya Entsiklopediya, 2006.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> V. E. Baghdasaryan, “The image of the enemy in Soviet historical films of the 1930s-1940s”, in *Patriotic History*, no. 6, 2003, p. 31-46; E. Ya. Margolit, “The country is a double: Germany in the Soviet films of the interwar period”, in *Homeland*, no. 10, 2017, p. 68-71; O. I. Grigoriev, “The image of Germany in the mass consciousness of Soviet citizens on the eve of World War II (according to sources of personal origin)”, in *Bulletin “Lomonosov”, Series “Social Sciences”*, no. 17, 2017, p. 54-62; M. Turovskaya, “Easy at heart or Kraft durch Freude”, in *Soviet Power and Media: A Collection of Articles*, no. 37, 2016, p. 242-261.

the operational reflection of the scriptwriters and directors of momentary political needs to the field of building the fundamental foundation of the new worldview of Soviet man – the builder of a communist society. “The pillars of a new worldview” is, first of all, “a homogeneous perception of the past by the working people”<sup>27</sup>, that is, the creation of a frame structure of a common historical memory of a people from a set of mythologies, folklore, structured (scientific) history, museum artifacts, censored memoirs, archival documents and other sources<sup>28</sup>.

Stalin attached decisive importance to the genre of historical cinema. The diaries of Ivan Bolshakov, the chairman of the Committee for Cinematography Affairs at the USSR Council of People’s Commissars, contain over 30 references to the fact that the leader on the brink of the war read through two or three historical movie scripts almost every week<sup>29</sup>. However, almost all movie officials in their memoirs note that Stalin never imposed his personal viewer preferences on motion picture distribution. Of foreign pictures, he preferred to watch only detective stories and westerns, although at meetings of the Politburo he repeatedly opposed the Westernization of Soviet cinematography<sup>30</sup>. Plots for historical motion pictures underwent rigorous selection. In 1936, the script by Sergei Eisenstein “The Tale of Igor’s Campaign” was rejected – the associative threat from nomads with a sad ending for the kniaz, according to Stalin, was not relevant in modern realities<sup>31</sup>. A year later, the creator of “Potemkin” suffered a new setback – the ready-made camera report of the “Spain” motion picture (about the brutal battle of inter-brigades with Falangists) — was banned for production. According to Dmitry and Victor Shlyapentokhov, American cinema historians, Stalin forbade Eisenstein to shoot a revealing film about Spanish fascism because the Communists, firstly, lost the war, and, secondly, the Falangists mirrored the situation inside the USSR. Franco took total control of the countr’s economy and began

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<sup>27</sup> G. Orlova, “*We see firsthand: cinema and the Soviet project in the era of their technical reproducibility*”, in *Soviet Power and Media: Collection of Articles*, no. 4, 2006, p. 188-203.

<sup>28</sup> T. Portnova, “*The Dying Swan by A. Pavlova: Choreography and iconography of the image*”, in *Space and Culture, India*, vol. 6, no. 5, 2019, p. 241-251.

<sup>29</sup> I. Bolshakov, *Soviet cinema art during the years of World War II*, Moscow, Goskinoizdat, 1950.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*; A. Ya. Gurevich, *History of a historian*, Moscow, Universitetskaya Kniga, 2014; S. Freilich, *Films and years*, Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1964.

<sup>31</sup> A. Ya. Gurevich, *History of a historian*, Moscow, Universitetskaya Kniga, 2014; S. Freilich, *Films and years*, Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1964.



to think over “his five-year plans”<sup>32</sup>. While reading the historical motion picture script, Joseph Stalin always projected the cinematic action onto Soviet reality. This is showed by the many corrections on the margins of manuscripts made by his hand. According to the testimony of Soviet and foreign film historians, he repeatedly voiced his claims and comments to the directors on the personalities of the images of charismatic Russian commanders<sup>33</sup>.

The leader publicly scolded Vsevolod Pudovkin and Mikhail Doller – the creators of the “Suvorov” motion picture – for the fact that their commander looks like an lackluster, “kind old man” who wins battles merely thanks to his “cock-a-doodle-doo”. Accordingly, Kutuzov, in the self-titled motion picture, is portrayed as “an ancient ruin in comparison with the strong Bonaparte”<sup>34</sup>. Almost all the authors who came into contact with the subject matter agree that ideological concepts in Soviet cinematography of the interwar period were implanted “manually” personally by Stalin or by functionaries of the upper echelon of the Bolshevik government – Zhdanov, Molotov, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov. The entire “operating system” of ideological communication in the cinematography, the sequence of the algorithm for matching the ideological concept and the artistic representation of reality, were left behind the attention of researchers<sup>35</sup>.

In Western cinematography, such “manual control”, for some kind of ideological “implantation” in the dramaturgy of a particular motion picture, was, by definition, impossible, since the movie was a commercial product that had to be sold. However, the Western directors image used indirect methods of cinematic instruments to outline the enemy. Many foreign cinema critics highlight several common ideological subtexts in Western European and American cinema, which emphasize the hostile

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<sup>32</sup> D. V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet cinematography 1918-1991: ideological conflict and social reality*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1993.

<sup>33</sup> S. Freilich, *Films and years*, Moscow, Iskusstvo, 1964; D. V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet cinematography 1918-1991: ideological conflict and social reality*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1993.

<sup>34</sup> M. V. Yampolsky, *Polemic notes on the aesthetics of a mass film*, Moscow, Union of Cinematographers, 1987; B. Shumyatsky, *Cinema of millions*, Moscow, Kinofotoizdat, 1935.

<sup>35</sup> T. V. Portnova, “Historical aspects of project technologies development and opportunities for their use in scenic arts”, in *Space and Culture, India*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2018, p. 48-56.

strangeness of two worlds: capitalism and socialism<sup>36</sup>. In a concentrated form, the Western ideological concept looked as follows:

– the main character (superman) – the embodiment of all virtues, masculinity, determination, and... sexuality. In socialist cinematography, strong people lack sexuality – they are sexless;

– in the west, the protagonist saves the world in the name of all mankind, and not just one idea;

– the main values of Western cinematography: country – people – family; values of Soviet cinematography: state of workers and peasants – socialism – Soviet people.

However, commercial cinematography in Europe and the USA did not escape the temptation to carry out direct political orders, where the Communists and the USSR were declared the main enemy. This is the famous British film “Forbidden Territory”, released in 1934, – a detective thriller about the struggle of the British special services with spies from the State Political Administration of USSR<sup>37</sup>. And, of course, the anti-Bolshevik cycle of German filmmakers: “Our Flag Leads Us Forward”, “S.A.-Mann Brand” and “For Human Right”, where the Communists are represented offspring of the universal evil<sup>38</sup>. However, such (straightforward) ideological concepts in the pictures of European cinematography are isolated cases. This is evidenced by the list of pre-war German films that were rolled as trophies in the USSR after the war. There are many musicals, melodramas, and adventures<sup>39</sup>. There were very few feature films with a direct political context in the Goebbels distribution network.

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<sup>36</sup> W. Michalka, “Russlandbilder des auswaertigen amts und deutscher diplomaten”, in *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich*, vol. 14, no. 7, 1994, p. 79-104; V. Golovskoy, “Art and propaganda in the Soviet Union, 1980-5”, in A. Lawton (ed.), *The Red Screen. Politics, Society, Art in Soviet Cinema*, London and New York, Routledge, 2016; M. Strada, “A half century of American cinematic imagery: Hollywood’s portrayal of Russian characters, 1933-1988”, in *Coexistence*, no. 26, 2017, 74-83.

<sup>37</sup> W. Michalka, “Russlandbilder des auswaertigen amts und deutscher diplomaten”, in *Das Russlandbild im Dritten Reich*, vol. 14, no. 7, 1994, p. 79-104.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> T. V. Portnova, “Synthesized nature of fine arts and ballet theater: System analysis of genre development”, in *European Journal of Science and Theology*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2018, p. 189-200.

## **Methodology**

The main research methodology was the methods of a systematic analysis of a historical phenomenon, which allowed to trace the origins of the ideological concept, its structure and the main methods of its implantation into the interwar cinematography of the USSR, European countries and the USA. Analytical systematicity enabled the identification of objective factors affecting the actualization of the political component in the plots of documentary and feature films, as well as the process of the interaction of cinematic art and politics, when the reflection of a talented director has an indirect effect on the adoption of an authoritative decision. In the process of work, methods of historical comparative studies were also used, allowing to recreate the initial political environment of the emergence, development and “fading away” of the ideological concept proposed for conveyance through specific cinematic products. The tools of comparative historical analysis allowed to model situational analogues of the power levers of the ruling elites of Europe and the USA to create a “political response” to all propaganda efforts of the totalitarian regime in the USSR using the language of cinematography.

The problem-chronological method, which belongs to the group of special historical disciplines, allowed the author to trace the evolution of the ideological concept in creating the on-screen image of the enemy and to fix the intensity of the political public procurement at various time stages of the investigated period. An important research method was the content analysis of texts of specific ideological messages: orders, instructions, and requirements of the Soviet leadership for screenwriters, directors, and organizers of the motion picture process (directors of motion picture studios). Many regulations governing the ideological content of motion pictures are composed of “blurred” vocabulary and are marked with semantic contradictions in the discourse of formal logic, which indicates a tense struggle of political clans in the country’s party leadership.

In the paper, research methods of two tested groups were applied:

1. General scientific group:

– historical, involving the study of the process of cinematography evolution in Soviet propaganda, with characteristic general and special features;

– logical, allowing to identify the general patterns and tendencies of the emergence and translation of the mechanism of the ideological

concept into the dramaturgy of motion pictures of the interwar period in the cinema of Western Europe, the USSR and the USA as applied to specific external and internal political conditions;

– classification and systematization – a grouping of facts into a specific system used to establish similarities or differences between them in the process of creating a description of the mechanism for implanting the content of an ideological concept in the paradigm “government (customer and producer of the concept) – motion picture (content and conveyance of the concept) – viewer (consumer of the concept)”.

2. Special historical methods group:

– the problem-chronological method, which allowed to divide the subject of the ideological concept in the cinematography of the interwar period into more narrow issues, such as: an increased level of expectations of power elites from “ideological implanting” of the products of national cinematography;

– identification of the main methods of implanting an ideological concept into the motion picture production chain (dramatized screenplay – director’s script – principal photography – montage – premiere/theatrical distribution – evaluation by critics and audience);

– the efficiency of creating and implanting an ideological concept into a motion picture as a response to the challenge (irritant) of domestic and foreign policy; the development of long-term and short-term ideological “implantations” in films of wide distribution;

– features of the organization of direct and indirect conveyance of the ideological concept through theatrical motion pictures of the USSR and Western countries (Europe, USA);

– a retrospective method (historical modeling method) was used to recreate the process of forming the “image of the enemy” on the example of Nazi Germany, Francoist Spain and fascist Italy, as well as in relation to the internal political opposition in the USSR;

– quantitative methods – content analysis aimed at the subsequent interpretation of the revealed patterns upon analyzing the texts of the ideological order of scenarios for motion pictures of the interwar period in the USSR, Germany and Italy. Many regulations governing the ideological content of motion pictures are composed of vague wordings and are marked with semantic contradictions in the discourse of formal logic, which indicates a tense struggle of political clans in the leaderships of powers;

– methods of historical comparative studies, which allow to recreate the initial political environment of the emergence, development

and “fading away” of the ideological concept, proposed for implantation into specific cinematographic products and able to model situational analogues of power levers of the ruling elites of Europe and the United States to create a cinema language of “political response” to all the propaganda efforts of the totalitarian regime in the USSR. The research method of the stated topic determined the main content and results presented in this paper.

## Results and discussion

The development of cinema between the two world wars started with the construction of the foundation – an informational reality that accompanied the further installation of the “frame structure” of the mass political consciousness of the civilian population<sup>40</sup>. Here, the Soviet leadership had several starting advantages over Western elites. Firstly, there was a strict monopoly of the state on the media and, in fact, on any printed and audiovisual information (radio, theater, cinema, painting, posters – visual activism, etc.). Secondly, there was unlimited public confidence in the media, on the one hand, and, on the other, total control over the private interpretation of official facts (repressions against the distributors of gossip, rumors, anecdotes). Thirdly, the Bolsheviks inherited from tsarism an extremely low level of political culture of former subjects and, distrust of the West, ““absorbed with mother’s milk”, which was associated with a long domination of Germans in power structures under all the entire Romanov dynasty...”<sup>41</sup>. In the liberal democracies of Europe and the United States, it was impossible to establish such a total ideological control over citizens.

However, the implantation of anti-Bolshevik/anti-Nazi ideological concepts through the media, theater, radio, and cinema was facilitated by the infrastructural and technological advantages of commercial cinema in the West. The encyclopedic dictionary “Cinema” edited by Sergey Yutkevich gives comparative data “coverage of the population with stationary cinema halls in the countries of Western Europe, Latin America, the USA, the USSR, and Japan for 1936” (Table 1)<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> V. A. Nevezhin, *Soviet propaganda and ideological preparation for war*, Moscow, Institute of Russian History, 1999.

<sup>41</sup> R. N. Yurenev, *Soviet cinema of the thirties*, Moscow, VGIK, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> S. I. Yutkevich (ed.), *Cinema. Encyclopedic dictionary*, Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1987.

**Table 1: Stationary cinema halls in the countries of Western Europe, Latin America, USA, USSR and Japan, 1936**

Country	Number of cinema halls per 10.000 people
Germany	21
France	19
Switzerland	32
Spain	6
Portugal	8
Italy	30
Great Britain	16
Romania	11
USA	39
Mexico	0.8
Argentina	1.22
USSR	0.34
Japan	12

In the USSR, the conveyance of an imperial ideological concept to a specific person was hampered by the elementary lack of equipped cinema halls, and mobile cinema installations in conditions of gigantic spaces and impassability did not solve the general problem. Europe and Hollywood were ahead of the Soviet Union not only quantitatively, but also technologically in terms of motion picture production. In the USSR, before the war, there were no universal montage tables that allowed simultaneous synchronization of image and sound. Slowing down and speeding up the shooting was done manually, automated devices were not used for special effects, there was completely no monochrome stretching of color and light (the prototype of sepia) and, finally, the choice of nature outside the studio work was still accompanied by many different restrictions (weather, humidity, temperature restrictions, etc.). The technological and infrastructural lag of motion picture production behind the West and especially Hollywood was partially offset in the USSR by the advantages of the state monopoly in cinematography. The average time to produce full-length feature film in the Soviet Union ranged from 8 months to a year and a half. In Germany, France, Spain, and Switzerland – 4 months and 3 weeks, in the USA – 3.3 months<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

The total technological lag of the USSR motion picture production from the West should be added to the number of available film studios. In Europe and the United States, in addition to giant film companies engaged in large-scale projects, there were thousands of small production companies and companies that exclusively carried out public procurements for educational and propaganda pictures. However, the material resources of national cinematographic productions and the internal information space of states, between the two world wars, can only partially determine the effectiveness of ideological communication “state – people”, expressed in the development, conveyance, and rooting of the ideological concept in the individual’s identity by means of cinematography. To find out the effectiveness of the “ideological implantations” in cinematography, it is necessary to gradually break down the process of creating a powerful ideological concept, its adaptation to director’s reflection, followed by the author’s “interlacing” in the dramatic twist of the picture. The production of theatrical motion pictures, both in the USSR and in the West during the interwar period, was modular in nature. The first is the writing of the dramatized screenplay, the second is the creation of the director’s script, the third is the principal photography (casting, the schedule of studio and location filming, etc.), the fourth is the premiere and reviews of critics, and the fifth is the wide audience distribution for the ready motion picture.

In Hollywood and at European film studios, the dramatized screenplay was replaced by a detailed synopsis, which offered the director a ready-made plot twist of the screen story without a certain dramatic load (without putting meaningful accents in the plot). At Soviet motion picture studios, literary design was strictly required to provide the script in Glavlit. The premiere of the new motion picture in the USSR was first held in a closed hall. This stage was needed to obtain a party leadership visa to load the motion picture copying factories for wide distribution in the country. In Europe and Hollywood, the premiere and expert reviews of critics were necessary for the promotion and payback of the motion picture. These very small differences in modular film production in the Soviet Union and in the West simplify the identification of the mechanisms for conveying the ideological concept in the cinematography of the 1920-1940s. The complete communicative algorithm of the ideological concept in the cinematography of the interwar period in the USSR can be traced in the cult motion picture of the Vasiliev “brothers” called “Chapaev”, which was released in 1934.

In 1931, the chairperson of the board of Soyuzkino, Boris Shumyatsky, commissioned a script for a feature film based on Dmitry Furmanov's novel "Chapaev" from the widow of the writer, Anna Furmanova. The initiator of a large-scale project of 8 feature films about the Civil War, in commemoration of the 15th anniversary of the victory of the Red Army over the White Guards and interventionists, was the Politburo led by Stalin<sup>44</sup>. "Chapaev" was the first in the list of announced motion pictures. The requirements of the ideological concept for the dramatized screenplay were the most general: to portray the heroism and commitment of the Red Army soldiers in battles with well-armed, trained, but not having a noble goal, units of the White Guards and Entente troops. This "blurred" wording gave a well-known room for creativity, both for the screenwriter and the director. Anna Furmanova, a woman who is far from the cinematography, who in three years would head GITIS and train all scriptwriters of the country, wrote her first script in 7 months. The directors Sergey and Georgiy Vasiliev read the text and... threw it into the bin. The story was full of slogan passages and calls for action, where the legendary divisional commander was hidden behind the powerful figure of the commissar. The ideological concept existed separately from the plot story and looked like a foreign body. Subsequently, the Vasilyevs forced the widow several times to translate the novel of her late husband into the language of cinematography, but to no avail. In the end, the directors themselves wrote 66 scenes of the future motion picture and sent it to Boris Shumyatsky for approval. During principal photography, stage directors were limited only by the timing and budget of the motion picture, which doubled from the original. There was no petty ideological guardianship on the part of the officials<sup>45</sup>.

Pre-premiere of the motion picture took place in the viewing hall "Sovkino" in Gnezdikovskiy Lane. Members of the Politburo, officials of the People's Commissariat of Culture, editor of the journal Proletarian Cinema Nikolai Shpikovskiy and several cinema critics from the Association of Workers of Revolutionary Cinematography (ARRK) were present. After the demonstration, everyone was given two hours to comment and amend. There were 724 of them<sup>46</sup>. All comments were acute negative. However, Stalin, having read the protocol of the

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>45</sup> R. Messer, *Chapaev*, Moscow, Editorial and Publishing Sector LOK Rossnabfilm, 1934.

<sup>46</sup> I. Makarova, "The first days of mastery", in *Motherland*, no. 11, 1994, p. 135-147.



“experts”, personally stood up for the directors and did not let the feature films turn into on-screen slogans. The leader did not allow the commissar to become the central figure of the plot, forbade the leveling of the image of an intelligent and treacherous white guard, and even, according to today’s publicists, allowed to leave the “erotic triangle” in the picture: orderly Peter – weaver Anna – machine gun “Maxim”<sup>47</sup>. The motion picture became a classic of world cinematography, the directors were treated with prizes and money. However, the most important thing is that it was after “Chapaev” that the algorithm for implanting the ideological concept into the dramaturgy of feature and documentary motion pictures was firmly entrenched in Soviet cinema. Schematically, it looked as follows:

- the terms of reference for the dramatized screenplay meticulously prescribed the content of the ideological concept, which should be reflected in the images of the characters and the dramatic/comedy/tragedy twist of the plot;

- the accepted dramatized screenplay was given to the directors for writing the working script of the motion picture with strict control in the studio;

- the principal photography in the studio and on locations was not subjected to any petty tutelage on the part of the ideological customer;

- the refinement of the ideological concept took place after a closed preview of the finished picture. The director, at the request of the customer, strengthened/reduced accents, re-shot episodes, sometimes conceptually corrected the images of heroes and, very rarely, changed actors, artists, and camera crew;

- the premiere of the picture, which was attended by the country’s top leadership that further allowed/prohibited theatrical distribution.

This order of implanting the ideological concept into the cinematography remained unchanged for all the prewar five-year plans. However, unforeseen failures sometimes occurred. In 1939, Joseph Stalin, after reading the first part of Sergei Eisenstein’s scenario trilogy “Ivan the Terrible”, forced the director to level out all the images of foreigners of the “Tsar’s inner circle” or even remove “all foreign influence from the narrative” to make the picture more national<sup>48</sup>. However, already during the war, Stalin directly intervened in the filming process and ordered the Glinsky’s “foreign agents” to be included in the plot, who “weave the threads of a conspiracy against the tsar, but, having

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>48</sup> M. I. Skulenko, *History of political propaganda*, Kiev, Lybid, 1990.

destroyed the obstinate boyars, Ivan the Terrible takes on the release of the dominion from external enemies and all foreigners”<sup>49</sup>. Such prompt adjustment of the ideological concept to the dramaturgy of the feature film was, rather the exception than the rule, and was never repeated. In Russian and foreign literature, there are no studies on the quality of translation of the ideological concept. This process directly depended on the design of the ideological message (terms of reference), which was given in the form of oral directives and less often took the form of a written order for the scriptwriter and director.

The ideological content of the cinematography objectively and directly should have corrected the author’s reflection upon creating dramatized and director’s scripts, but in practice this did not always work out. This refers to the tectonics of the director’s worldview mentality, which determined the creativity of any expert and stood above the individual craft. Here, it is impossible to establish some kind of “general quality coefficient” (meeting the wishes of the customer) in the conveyance of the ideological concept, since the worldview of the director-creator constitutes fingerprints that are not amenable to systematic classification. Nevertheless, memoir literature allows to find individual methodological techniques which the authorities nevertheless tried using to correct their “procurements”. However, these techniques have not developed into a common system of control of the ideological concept for the prewar cinematography.

Today, modern historians refer to such imperious attempts to “have a hand on motion picture industry” in an ironic context. Thus, for example, the picture of the Vasilyev directors “Volochev Days”, released in 1937, about the struggle of the red partisans against Japanese invaders in the Far East, was withdrawn from theatrical distribution and returned as many as three times, focusing on the course of negotiations with the Japanese side after the conflict on the Chinese-Eastern Railway. The clash between the USSR and Japan took place as early as 1929, and therefore the procurement for the ideological concept of the motion picture lost its “reporting relevance” by the time of the peace talks with the Japanese. However, when diplomats from Tokyo showed “intransigence”, the motion picture was returned to the theatrical distribution for cinemas in Vladivostok. Thus, the ideological concept

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

through the directorial reflection of Vasiliev “brothers” served as an indirect tool of real politics<sup>50</sup>.

A similar situation occurred with the motion picture by Sergei Eisenstein “Alexander Nevsky”, which was withdrawn from theatrical distribution after the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and then returned to theaters in June 1941<sup>51</sup>. In the pre-war period, the general framework of the implantation of the ideological concept in Soviet cinematography started taking shape. The images of the characters were canonized, the storylines lost their background tone, and the dramatic part of the narrative was extremely simplified. Any error of the scriptwriter and director threatened the latter with strong disfavor in the profession. Mikhail Romm was the first to suffer in the context of violating this ideological canon. Because of Lenin’s kiss with Krupskaya, he was forced to completely recompile the epoch-making picture “Lenin in October” and was permanently removed from independent filming<sup>52</sup>.

Grigory Alexandrov was not punished for a similar mistake but was forced to cut “erotic kisses” from the film “Volga-Volga”<sup>53</sup>. In 1939, the Chairman of the Committee for Cinematography Affairs Ivan Bolshakov himself barely escaped the plight, who set the Politburo members to watch *Atalanta*, the harmless picture of the French director Vigo, where a girl in a closed bathing suit walks on the boat of her rich groom<sup>54</sup>. In European and American cinematography, the algorithm of the ideological concept in the dramatic outline of feature and documentary pictures was left entirely to scriptwriters and directors. However, this does not mean that motion picture companies gave carte blanche to creative people. The powerful off-screen background of almost all Hollywood and European motion pictures of the pre-war period had a tough ideological concept, revolving around anti-Bolshevism and the threat of liberal democracy from the totalitarian

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<sup>50</sup> A. S. Lozhkina, “The formation of the “image of the enemy”: Japan in the Soviet propaganda of the 1930s”, in *Public Administration. Electronic Bulletin*, no. 13. 2007, Available at: [http://e-journal.spa.msu.ru/uploads/vestnik/2007/vipusk\\_13.\\_dekabr\\_2007\\_g./lozhkina.pdf](http://e-journal.spa.msu.ru/uploads/vestnik/2007/vipusk_13._dekabr_2007_g./lozhkina.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> B. B. Schenk, *Alexander Nevsky in Russian cultural memory: saint, ruler, national hero (1263-2000)*, Moscow, Novoye Literaturnoye Obozreniye, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> M. I. Romm, *Like in the movies. Oral stories*, Nizhny Novgorod, Dekom, 2003.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*.

regimes – the inhabitants of universal evil and the destruction of the free world<sup>55</sup>.

All westerns shot by American motion picture companies in the 1920-1940s have a “rigid ideological lining”. The main protagonists stand in the name of justice, sanctified by law. They give their lives and strength in the name of justice, which “according to the viewers, must be consolidated in some legal act, code, or amendment to the US Constitution”<sup>56</sup>. And, on the contrary, negative characters fulfill the request of someone's individual, capricious, and evil will (for which read – dictator, Fuhrer, secretary general). Such an “off-screen tradition” is worth complimenting with memoirs of American directors who personally survived 1917-1918 in Petrograd and “observed the cannibalism of the Bolshevik dictatorship”. This is the famous documentary of Florence Harper and Donald Thompson: “The German Curse of Russia” and “From the Tsar to Lenin”, which was banned from distribution in the USSR until 1991<sup>57</sup>.

Nevertheless, the quality of the ideological concept and the intensity of its implementation into the dramaturgy of the interwar cinematography did not differ much from each other in terms of efficiency. Hollywood cinema successfully coped with its ideological load. After the crisis, the Great Depression, and the Roosevelt New Deal, Americans developed a structured national consciousness with all the basic definitions: “The American Dream,” “American Values,” “The American Way,” and “American Interests”. In the Soviet Union, “manual control” of the ideological concept by the party elite also yielded certain results. The framework of the national idea was formed – the building of socialism in a certain select country. The following “stones” are laid in the worldview foundation of mass consciousness: “socialism and communism are the fairest world order on the Earth”, “USSR is the state of workers and peasants”, “capitalism and imperialism are sources of oppression and exploitation of the working masses”. The European governments, except for Germany and Italy, did not take decisive steps towards organization of the implementation of the ideological concept into the cinematography of wide distribution. For

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<sup>55</sup> D. V. Shlapentokh, *Soviet cinematography 1918-1991: ideological conflict and social reality*, New York, Aldine de Gruyter, 1993.

<sup>56</sup> T. Shaw, D. J. Youngblood, *Cinematic Cold War. The American and Soviet struggle for hearts and minds*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2010.

<sup>57</sup> H. J. Bruce, S. Dalliance, B. Pares, “My Russian memoirs “Sir George Buchanan in Russia””, in *Slavonic Review*, vol. 3, no. 9, 1925, p. 113-121.

the interwar period, liberal democracies failed to turn their national cinematography into a powerful tool for nation unity on the brink of the great test<sup>58,59</sup>.

The development of cinematography between the two world wars was the era of its aesthetic, genre, and technological development. Two epoch-making discoveries (dialectical montage and sound synchronization) transformed motion pictures not only into a special kind of syncretic art, but also into a powerful means of controlling mass consciousness. The perception of the on-screen action did not require neither basic knowledge (literacy), nor minimal spectator efforts to decode the symbols of the narrative, as it happens when reading a book, watching a theater performance, ballet, or opera. Cinematography offered the population a ready-to-use worldview product. It was this feature of the young art form that was demanded in the interwar period by the political elites of the USA, the USSR, and European states for ideological interventions in the mass consciousness of the population.

The political communication of power and society through cinematography took place in the process of implanting ideological concepts into the dramaturgy of motion pictures of different genres. The mechanism of “implanting” an ideological concept into on-screen action in the West and in the USSR was distinguished by its structure, goals, strategic, and tactical tasks. In the Soviet Union, the ideological concept was conveyed by the party leadership of the country “manually”: in each motion picture. The modular nature of cinematic production allowed for control at the stages of creating dramatized and director’s scripts and upon accepting a finished motion picture. The process of principal cinematography was loosely controlled by the state, which left the space for author’s reflection of the director to “creatively process” a rigid ideological procurement in relation to the plot dramaturgy of the picture.

In the USA and Western Europe, there was no strict custody of the “political customer”, since the state-owned theatrical cinematography segment occupied a small fraction of all commercial pictures produced. However, the implementation of the ideological concept in Hollywood and Western Europe was performed by indirect directorial tools in constructing the dramatic twists of on-screen action. Western

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<sup>58</sup> K. R. Nurgali, “Representation of ancient times in Kazakh historical novel”, in *Life Science Journal*, vol. 10, no. 11, 2013, p. 298-301.

<sup>59</sup> K. R. Nurgali, K. M. Baytanasova, J. K. Kishkenbaeva, “Author's role in the literary field by the example of Kazakh literature”, in *World Applied Sciences Journal*, vol. 25, no. 9, 2013, p. 1290-1294.

telecommunications have achieved impressive results. For thirty years, it worked out many channels of ideological communication “state – society” and created the illusion of a social contract. Today’s systemic technologies of information digitalization (finding target audiences, influencers, etc.) originate in the interwar space of liberal cinematography.