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‘The Voice of the Enemy’: Using Linguistic Means for Representing ‘Amerika’ in the Cold War Soviet Films

Oleg V. Riabov, Marina N. Kulikova

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About the Contributors
Oleg Vyacheslavovich Riabov[1], Marina Nikolaevna Kulikova[2]
[1]Doctor of Science (Philosophy), Professor, Leading Researcher in the Laboratory for Visual History, National Research University Higher School of Economics — St Petersburg, Russia
https://orcid.org/0000–0002–5944–9668
riabov1@inbox.ru
[2]Candidate of Science (Philology), Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages for Journalism, Philology and Arts, St. Petersburg State University, Russia
https://orcid.org/0000–0003–2501–9894
kulikm@yandex.ru, m.kulikova@spbu.ru
Affiliation
[1]National Research University Higher School of Economics — St Petersburg, 16, Soyuza Pechatnikov, St Petersburg, 190121, Russia.
[1]Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, 48, Moika River Emb., St Petersburg, 191186, Russia.
[2]St. Petersburg State University, 7–9, Universitetskaya Embankment, St Petersburg, 199034, Russia.

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Abstract
Using Soviet films released between 1948 and 1963, this article examines how linguistic means — including language competence, accent, pronunciation errors, and lexical choices — are employed to construct the cinematic Cold War dichotomy of ‘us’ and ‘them’. It argues that linguistic means are used to distinguish ‘us’ from external ‘them’, to construct images of internal ‘them’, and to rehumanise ‘them’ during the warming of Soviet Union–United States relations. Comparing Soviet films with American ones, the authors identify both common and distinct features in the use of linguistic means.

Keywords
Cold War, Soviet cinema, enemy image, image of the USA, ‘us and them’, linguistic means of stylisation, phonetic stylisation, contaminated speech of foreigners, accent

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«Вражий голос»: Использование лингвистических средств для репрезентаций Америки в советских фильмах Холодной войны

Олег Вячеславович Рябов, Марина Николаевна Куликова

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Сведения об авторах
Олег Вячеславович Рябов[1], Марина Николаевна Куликова[2]
[1]доктор философских наук, профессор, ведущий научный сотрудник Лаборатории визуальной истории Национального исследовательского университета «Высшая школа экономики», Санкт-Петербург, Россия
https://orcid.org/0000–0002–5944–9668
riabov1@inbox.ru
[2]кандидат филологических наук, доцент кафедры иностранных языков в сфере журналистики, филологии и искусств Санкт-Петербургского государственного университета, Санкт-Петербург, Россия.
https://orcid.org/0000–0003–2501–9894
kulikm@yandex.ru, m.kulikova@spbu.ru

Аффилиация
[1]Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики» — Санкт-Петербург, 190121, Россия, г. Санкт-Петербург, ул. Союза Печатников, д. 16.
[1]Российский государственный педагогический университет им. А. И. Герцена, 191186, Россия, Санкт-Петербург, наб. Реки Мойки, д. 48
[2]Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет, 199034, Российская Федерация, г. Санкт-Петербург, Университетская набережная, 7–9

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Аннотация
В статье на материале советских фильмов, вышедших на экраны в период с 1948 по 1963 гг., исследуется, как при помощи лингвистических средств (языковые компетенции, акцент, ошибки в произношении и выборе слов и др.) противопоставляются «свои» и «чужие» в рамках кинематографической Холодной войны. Показано, что лингвистические средства привлекаются для противопоставления «своих» и внешних «чужих», для конструирования образов внутренних «чужих», а также для регуманизации «чужих» в период потепления советско-американских отношений. Сравнивая советские фильмы с американскими, авторы выделяют как общие черты использования лингвистических средств, так и различные.

Ключевые слова
Холодная война, кинематограф СССР, образ врага, образ США, «свои и чужие», лингвистические средства стилизации, фонетическая стилизация, контаминированная речь иностранцев, акцент

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From its earliest days, cinema has served as an effective means of constructing contrasts between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (see, for example, D. W. Griffith’s 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*). With the advent of sound cinema, the imagological potential of film — that is, its capacity to construct images of ‘us’ and ‘them’—has significantly expanded, particularly through the opposition of ‘our’ and ‘their’ languages.

Previous studies have shown that linguistic devices in cinema function as tools for producing symbolic boundaries and reinforcing social hierarchies (see, for example [Androutsopoulos, 2012], [Bleichenbacher, 2012], [Lawless, 2014], [Planchenault, 2012], [Taavitsainen & Melchers, 1999], [Kashkarova [2024]). In our earlier research on US cinema, we demonstrated that language was employed as one of the instruments of the cinematic Cold War and as a means of constructing the image of ‘enemy number one’. In such representations, the enemy was both visible and audible on screen [Kulikova & Riabov, 2023]. This article examines how linguistic means are used to construct the contrast between ‘us’ and ‘them’ in Soviet cinema. It analyses linguistic competence — when filmmakers give characters the ability to speak a foreign language — as well as accent, pronunciation errors, lexical choices, and substandard or distorted forms that imitate foreign speech.

First, we outline the methodological framework of the study. We then examine how linguistic means are used to construct the dichotomy of ‘us’ and external ‘them’. The following section focuses on the representation of internal ‘others’. This is followed by an analysis of the rehumanisation of ‘them’ during the warming of Soviet Union–United States relations. Finally, we compare our findings with data from US films, highlighting both similarities and differences in the use of linguistic means.

The sources comprise Soviet films released between 1946 and 1963. In total, around 60 films featuring American characters were released in the USSR during this period (see the filmography in Riabov et al., 2023)[1]. Of particular interest are those in which Amer-

1 Although some of these films refer only to an unnamed ‘Western country’, numerous indirect cues made it easy for Soviet viewers to identify the United States. This kind of ‘disguise’ was typically linked to the position of foreign policy departments, which were reluctant to escalate tensions with the United States unless absolutely necessary (see, for example, discussions of this issue during the Art Council meetings on *The Judgement of the Mad (Sud sumasshedshikh*, directed by Grigori Roshal, 1961) at Mosfilm: Transcript of the meeting of the Art Council on 15 March 1960 to discuss G Roshal’s literary screenplay *The Judgement of the Mad* [RGALI 2453/4/189: 1–11, 19] and Transcript of the meeting of the association’s Art Council to discuss G Roshal’s director’s screenplay *The Judgement of the Mad* [RGALI 2453/5/692: 2, 5]). It should be noted that this did not prevent audiences — including contemporary Russian viewers — from identifying Americans by a range of distinctive features [Riabova & Kleshchenko, 2024]. The film *The Boy from the Schooner ‘Columbus’* (*Yunga so shkhuny Kolumb*, directed by Evgeniy Sherstobitov, 1963), also underwent a curious revision. In the director’s script, all references to the nationality of the spies and their handlers from the intelligence services were omitted. However, even this proved insufficient: the name of the main CIA agent, referred to in the script as ‘Fred’ [RGALI 2329/12/1381: 94], was removed from the final cut of the film, and he appeared simply as ‘Redbeard’. Notably, this did not prevent audiences — including contemporary Russian viewers — from identifying him as American, owing to a number of distinctive features, in particular his habit of putting his feet up on the table [Riabova & Kleshchenko, 2024].

icans speak English or broken Russian. We have identified only a few such films, including *The Court of Honor* (*Sud Chesti*, directed by Abram Room, 1948), *A Man Changes Skin* (*Chelovek menyaet kozhu*, directed by Rafail Perelshteyn, 1959), *Peace to Him Who Enters* (*Mir vkhodyashchemu*, directed by Aleksandr Alov and Vladimir Naumov, 1961), and *Hello, Children!* (*Zdravstvuyte, deti!*, directed by Mark Donskoy, 1962).

Methodology

Language reflects social relationships and shapes cognitive representations. Different linguistic means are therefore often deliberately used to construct particular versions of reality (see, for example, Fairclough, 1989; Culpeper, 2001). Crucially for this study, language functions as a means of drawing symbolic boundaries between social groups and reinforcing social hierarchies. Phillipson uses the term 'linguicism' to denote 'ideologies, structures and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language' [Phillipson, 1992: 47].

Linguicism is a significant component of cinematic discourse which we understand — following Janis Androutsopoulos — as 'the ensemble of film-as-text and processes of its production and consumption' [Androutsopoulos, 2012: 140]. Consequently, anything said in the film might be used as a stylistic device with a certain purpose to produce and reveal the ideological message of the film. Androutsopoulos points out that linguistic heterogeneity and stylisation are of great importance for cinematic discourse [Androutsopoulos, 2012: 139].

In analysing the Hollywood cinema, Bleichenbacher notes that 'movies pervaded by linguicist ideologies can be expected to portray speakers of languages other than English as more negative, and also to downplay the use of languages other than English' [Bleichenbacher, 2012: 157–158]. He assumes that 'a lot of non-English dialogue typically serves to make the respective L1 speakers more negatively salient' [Bleichenbacher, 2012: 150]. Characters who use non-standard speech more have lower status. These linguistic means are therefore used to indicate the status of the character, its character features or regional differences[1].

Among stylistic resources that are employed as linguistic means are accent, jargon, dialects, code-switching, and non-standard varieties to name just a few. Phonetic means play a particularly important role in the portrayal of foreign speech: even when utterances are grammatically and lexically correct, it is often the accent that reveals the speaker's otherness[2]. This may be manifested at both the phonetic and prosodic levels: in the former case, individual sounds may be mispronounced, while in the latter case, intonation patterns may be distorted, with stress incorrectly placed within phrases. Such deviations serve as markers of non-standard speech in contrast to the linguistic norm. Accordingly, the dichotomy between 'standard' and 'non-standard' speech is realised, contributing to the broader dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them' and supporting the promotion of a particular ideological perspective through language in cinema.

Thus, linguistic strategies for constructing cinematic images operate across all linguistic levels — phonetic, grammatical, and lexical. These devices serve to indicate inclusion in or exclusion from the category of 'us' or 'them', attributing either positive or negative characteristics to characters accordingly.

One of the first attempts to investigate the importance of language to promulgate the certain ideology in regards to cinematic Cold War has been made by Katerina Lawless in her article about James Bond films shot in 1962–2012, which created the image of the USSR [Lawless, 2014]. Her article generated a scholarly discussion [Vartanova, 2014]; [Ono, 2014]. However, the reviewers note her timely research and the necessity to continue investigating this subject. One promising area of research in this field is the study of Soviet cinema, particularly given the growing recognition of the importance of comparative approaches to the 'cultural Cold War' [Shorten, 2018; Riabov et al., 2023].

'Us' and external 'them'

Since the earliest centuries of human existence, language has served as the most important ethnically distinctive feature, marking the boundary between two communities: 'us' and 'them'. The category of 'them' represented a social space in which individuals had no protection, and a foreign language was therefore perceived as a sign of danger.

Foreign languages were also employed in Cold War films to evoke a sense of threat. In US cinema, this function was fulfilled by Russian speech or Cyrillic inscriptions[3]. In the USSR, it was primarily the German language that served this purpose in films about World War II. Less frequently, English also operated as a sign of danger in the sources we examined. For example, in *The Boy from the Schooner 'Columbus'*, the inscription 'CAIMAN' on the side of a ship carrying CIA agents and armed thugs — about to attack a Soviet schooner — reinforces the sense of alarm.

Denying 'outsiders' the ability to speak (or to speak the 'correct' language) is a common feature of dehumanising practices. Accents and speech errors are also used to mark the boundary between 'us' and 'them', and to distinguish the 'other'[4].

Linguistic means may serve to construct grotesque typification, particularly when various types of speech irregularities are exaggerated — including phonetic, morphological, and syntactic errors, incorrect word combinations, and calques from the character's native language. These devices may also be employed selectively. In the film *Silvery Dust* (*Serebristaya pyl*, directed by Abram Room, 1953), the German character Dr Kurt Schneider only once uses syntactic calquing from German grammatical structure: *'Доктор Джонс, я можно являться, когда хотеть.'* In the following sentence, he reveals his nationality: *'От меланхолии мы, немцы, уже избавились.'* When asked, *'В каком чине вы были в германской армии?'*, he replies, *'Полковник специальной службы.'* This scene lasts only a few seconds, but the enemy image is clearly conveyed, particularly given that the film was made shortly after the end of World War II. Here, the viewer hears syntactic errors in the speech of a German who appears to be an ex-SS colonel. At the same time, the symbolic Nazification of 'enemy number one'—that is, the attribution to them of secret ties with the Nazis during World War II, of collaboration with former Hitlerites after its end, and of parallels in their pursuit of global domination — played a

1 According to Taavitsainen & Melchers, 'it is mostly the low and the rural that are presented as speakers of non-standard; humorous parts are attributed to minor characters and non-standard language to side episodes [Taavitsainen & Melchers, 1999: 13].

2 Based on the qualitative and quantitative analyses, Lippi-Green comes to a conclusion that 'the negative characters are the largest group among those who speak English with a foreign (L2) accent' [Lippi-Green, 1997: 159].

3 It is also worth noting the use of Russian-language inscriptions and flawed English speech attributed to Soviet characters in Cold War-era comics and video games [Kulikova & Sputnitskai, 2024; Belov, 2024].

4 In the Hollywood film *Never Let Me Go* (directed by Delmer Daves, 1953), for instance, the positive characters — the protagonist, a Soviet ballerina who is in love with an American journalist, and her friend, a translator and teacher of English — speak English with only slight accents. Their [r] sounds are not exaggerated, their [h] sounds are softened, and their intonation closely resembles that of native speakers. In contrast, the negative characters, such as the state security officers, speak with a pronounced Russian accent, which serves as a deliberate grotesque characterisation of the enemy [Kulikova & Riabov, 2023].

crucial role in both Soviet and US Cold War rhetoric from the mid-1949s onwards. Drawing parallels with Hitler served to facilitate the transformation of the image of a former ally into that of an enemy [Riabov et al., 2023].

Just as Soviet characters in US films became more proficient in English as they embraced American values and renounced their communist beliefs [Kulikova & Riabov, 2023], so too did American characters in Soviet cinema improve their Russian language skills when they came closer to the Soviet people in terms of political beliefs and values. The film *A Man Changes Skin* tells the story of the construction of the Vakhsh Canal during the first Five-Year Plan. Jim Clark, an engineer from the United States, is among those who become inspired by the ideas of socialist transformation during the construction process and thus 'changes his skin'. He meets Komsomol member Masha Polozova and goes on to establish a happy Soviet-American family. This process of Sovietisation is achieved, among other things, through linguistic means — Clark changes not only his 'skin', but also his language. His Russian improves as a result of immersion in the appropriate linguistic environment, whereas another American character, who is portrayed as hostile to the idea of socialist transformation, does not learn Russian.

Another telling episode features the characters discussing an anonymous threat they have discovered. When one of them points out that the words '1 May' are written in Latin script, this is immediately taken as evidence that the author is not local, since Latin script is not taught in local primary schools. Within the logic of the film, knowledge of the Cyrillic alphabet is assumed as standard; the use of the Latin alphabet is therefore read as a marker of external influence, espionage, or subversion. A similar reasoning applies to the second element of the threat: the use of an incorrect symbolic sign. Instead of the traditional image of a severed head — aligned with local conceptions of punishment — the author uses a skull. The characters explicitly remark that the sign is 'done wrong', 'with the wrong signs'. The outsider has misread the cultural code, substituting symbols without knowing their precise meaning. In this way, the film uses the incorrect symbol as further evidence of foreign interference. The scene thus serves a powerful propaganda function: the stranger is defined not by ethnicity or social class, but through linguistic and graphic deviation. Writing in Latin script is as revealing as a foreign accent or the misuse of cultural symbols. A strict boundary is constructed: 'we' are those who write 'correctly', who possess the legitimate code and understand local meanings; 'they' betray themselves through linguistic and semiotic errors.

At the same time, different levels of linguistic competence serve different narrative functions. In one of the first Soviet films of the cinematic Cold War, *The Court of Honor*, the biochemist Sergey Losev publishes an article in the United States presenting the findings of research carried out by a Soviet scientific team on matters related to military security. He also submits a manuscript of his monograph to an American publishing house. Initially, his supervisor and co-author, Aleksei Dobrotvorsky, displays political short-sightedness by failing to recognise Losev's obsequiousness. Justice is ultimately served thanks to the efforts of the communists from the Institute of Experimental Medicine. The film features three American characters: secret service agents Wood and Wilby (both posing as scientists), and the eminent scientist Carter. Carter is portrayed as naive and harmless, and his complete lack of Russian language skills is presented as a positive trait. In contrast, Wood and Wilby speak Russian fluently — significantly, the latter goes to great lengths to conceal his knowledge of the language. Thus, in the film, knowledge of Russian among foreigners is depicted as a negative attribute, associated with enemy infiltration and used as a means to pursue subversive or criminal goals[1].

'Us' and internal 'them'

One function of the image of the external enemy is its use in the struggle against political opponents and ideological adversaries within the country. The legitimation of power and the existing socio-political order is linked to the portrayal of the ruling elite as reliable protectors, while the opposition is depicted as internal 'them' and accomplices of the external enemy. The image of internal 'them' was constructed through the use of various discourses: political othering was reinforced by ethnic, religious, gendered, civilisational and other forms of othering. Linguistic means were also among the resources used for this purpose. In Hollywood films, for example, enemy agents steal military secrets (e.g. *Kiss Me Deadly*, directed by Robert Aldrich, 1955), seek to provoke unrest in American society and stir up interclass and interracial conflicts (*The Red Menace*, directed by R G Springsteen, 1949), and plot to seize power in the United States (*The Manchurian Candidate*, directed by John Frankenheimer, 1962). In *The Red Menace*, American communists are primarily portrayed as ethnic 'others'. This is reflected in their surnames: among the members of the Communist Party of the United States in The Red Menace are Nina Petrovka, Yvonne Kraus and Henry Solomon. Meanwhile, the '100% American' characters are predominantly white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. To underscore this ethnic alienation and mark the internal enemy, Cold War cinema also employed linguistic means [Kulikova & Riabov, 2023].

During the Cold War, Soviet cinema did not employ ethnicity to label internal 'others'. Instead, the emphasis on ethnic differences was intended to highlight the country's multinational character as its advantage and the friendship of peoples in the USSR. Many protagonists, for example, speak Russian with an accent. Internal 'them' were othered politically by being portrayed as sympathetic to the American way of life or the culture of 'enemy number one'. The stilyagi were a favourite target of film satire, and Soviet cinema devoted several films to mocking them [Riabov et al., 2023]. At the same time, it was emphasised that admiration for a foreign way of life was far from harmless; in *The 'Variegateds' Case* (*Delo Pyostrykh*, directed by Nikolai Dostal, 1958), for example, the stilyagi appear as accomplices of a spy.

The film novella *Foreigners* (*Inostrantsy*, directed by Eduard Zmoyro, 1961) satirises the stilyagi's boundless admiration for all things foreign. This admiration makes them the victims of a prank organised by a Soviet journalist who pretends to be a wealthy American named Frank in order to write a satirical article exposing their morals. The stilyagi uncritically agree with all of the 'correspondent's' opinions; they cannot even entertain the notion that the United States might be in any way inferior to the USSR. A toy ape decorating the flat of the main character, the stilyaga 'George' Volobuev, appears repeatedly in the film. Accusations of 'aping around' (*обезьянничанье* in Russian)—that is, of blindly copying the West, especially the USA, by internal 'them' —were a key theme in Soviet propaganda. This idea is most clearly expressed in the short film *Intermedia*, part of the 1963 film anthology *The Big Fitil* (*Bolshoi Fitil*, 1963), in which a chimpanzee takes on the role of an abstract artist. Accompanied by three other apes performing a jazz composition, the chimpanzee 'paints' a series of masterpieces. The script describes the scene as follows: 'The chimpanzee-artist is dressed in a stilyagi shirt. What do we see? A toadstool, a goldfish, and all the other trappings of a stilyagi outfit.' Music plays

1 Perhaps the most striking episode in Soviet Cold War cinema that reflects a negative attitude towards knowledge of the Russian language appears in the film *Liberation* (*Osvobozhdenie*, directed by Yuri Ozerov, 1968). After being wounded in the Battle of Kursk, Major Maximov is taken prisoner. He responds indifferently to the Germans' questions, but when he hears flawless Russian spoken by someone who appears to be an ethnic German who had lived in the USSR before the war, his reaction changes dramatically: 'Russian?! You know Russian?!'

continuously in the background — it is 'chimpanzee jazz'. Each ape is given a name: the pianist is Bombi, the drummer is Chika, and the saxophonist is Mika' [RGALI 2911/1/153:86].

As we can see, this element of aping around is highlighted through linguistic means. In stereotypically American fashion, the so-called 'foreigners' also refer to themselves using 'foreign' names such as 'George' and 'Mary'. The image of 'George's' mother, whom he refers to as *'мазер'* (the transliteration of the English word 'mother') and who is another representative of this 'inner America', is intended to show that such adoration is not limited to young 'freeloaders', but is also characteristic of their parents. She is another representative of this 'inner America'. 'How far behind we are!' she exclaims, also attempting to speak like a foreigner.

It is telling that the pseudo-American 'Frank'—the exemplary Soviet citizen — speaks excellent English. In *Encounter at the Elbe* (*Vstrecha na Elbe*, directed by Grigori Aleksandrov, 1949), the protagonist, the exemplary Major Nikita Kuzmin, also learns English[1]. In *The Court of Honor*, one of the most uncompromising post-war films in its criticism of 'Kowtowing to the West', Soviet scientists speak and read English. In *Hello, Children!*, Soviet schoolchildren communicate in English with their peers from other countries. Thus, knowledge of the language of 'enemy number one' does not necessarily carry negative connotations in relation to the protagonist. This is not surprising, as Soviet anti-Americanism was class-based rather than national or cultural in nature. It was rooted in the idea of two Americas: in addition to the 'reactionary' Americans of the 'First America', there are also 'progressive' Americans of the 'Second America': communists, members of the working class, peace activists, Afro-Americans, and 'ordinary people' [Riabov et al., 2023].

Rehumanisation of 'them'

As Soviet Union–United States relations began to thaw in the second half of the 1950s, the portrayal of the United States in Soviet cinema underwent noticeable change. Notably, both Soviet and American films of the 1940s and 1950s had employed dehumanisation techniques to construct enemy images. Such techniques involve denying members of an outgroup the right to be regarded as part of the human race. In propaganda, they are employed to eliminate feelings of pity towards the enemy, thereby legitimising their killing if deemed necessary. The dismantling of such representations is best captured by the concept of rehumanisation — the process of restoring the human status of 'them'.

Work began in the early 1960s on the American film *The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming* (directed by Norman Jewison), which was eventually released in 1966. The film serves as a prime example of the rehumanisation of Soviet characters. The plot centres on a Soviet submarine, *Sprut* (*Octopus*), which runs aground near an island off the north-eastern coast of the United States. Part of the crew goes ashore to find a motor launch and refloat the vessel before it is discovered by American forces. Following a series of comic and dramatic incidents that nearly escalate into an armed clash between the sailors and the islanders, mutual understanding is achieved, friendships are formed, and the submarine is able to depart peacefully. The film conveys a clear message: Russians are also human beings — people with whom it is both possible and necessary to negotiate the terms of peaceful coexistence, and who share the same fundamental values as US citizens (for a detailed analysis, see Shaw 2010). How is this rehumanisation achieved linguistically? Firstly, the Soviet sailors are given the ability to speak English. In their conversations with Americans, they consistently try to behave politely, using formulaic language and fixed verbal expressions. A notable plot line of the film, contributing to the rehumanisation of Soviet people images, is a love story line that develops between the youngest sailor Alexei Kolchin and Alison Palmer. Kolchin speaks a mixture of Russian and English, which betrays his excitement: *'In Union of Soviet, when I am only young boy, many are saying, Americanski are bad people, they will attack Russia. So all mistrust American. But I think that I do not mistrust American… not really sinceriously. I wish not to hate… anybody!'*. This example clearly shows that contaminated speech is implemented at different levels of the language. There are grammatical errors in speech (absence of articles, incorrect use of tenses), phonetic errors (rolling [r]), morphological errors. However, he is so sincere in his statements that the audience, of course, have a liking for him. Linguistic means thus help to create an image of otherness. At the same time, the very possibility of communication shows that even linguistic errors cannot impede mutual understanding if representatives of the two superpowers show goodwill [Kulikova & Riabov, 2023: 729].

Let us now turn to Soviet cinema and examine the specific features of Soviet-style dehumanisation of 'enemy number one'. In the Soviet culture of the 1940s-1950s, dehumanisation of 'enemy number one' was based on the class principle; only socially and ideologically alien Americans were its target. 'Progressive' Americans on screen were endowed with all the attributes of humanity: intelligence, creativity, morality, emotional depth, compassion, and the capacity for love, friendship, and camaraderie. However, this humanity was, firstly, contingent on their belonging to a particular social group, their sympathy for the USSR and support for its policies, and their communist or left-wing convictions. Secondly, these 'progressive Americans' were symbolically Sovietised: their defining trait was their resemblance to Soviet citizens. In other words, only one version of humanity was acknowledged — modelled on the ideal of the new Soviet person. The closer a character came to this model, the more fully they conformed to the canon of what it meant to be human. Thus, Soviet-style rehumanisation implied that one could be different from a Soviet person and still be considered human. By contrast, contemporary representations of American characters in Soviet film began to detach the notion of humanity from political alignment. Americans portrayed as socially or ideologically alien — who neither supported communist ideals nor admired Soviet policy — could nonetheless be depicted sympathetically [Riabov, 2024].

Let us consider how linguistic means are used to convey these themes in the film *Peace to Him Who Enters*. One of the central characters is an American military driver who assists Soviet soldiers in taking a pregnant German woman to hospital during the final days of the war, in May 1945. The directors made his image — apparently, intentionally — different from exemplary Soviet images: The interior of his *Studebaker* is decorated with pictures of pin-up girls — a symbol, in Soviet mass media, of the vulgarity of American culture. When the Soviet soldiers begin dancing in celebration of Germany's surrender, the American joins in with a movement resembling the twist — another emblem of the moral decline of bourgeois culture. The most striking difference, however, lies in their manner of speech. The driver does not understand any word in Russian. He speaks only English, and his speech is left untranslated into Russian. Neither the Soviet nor the American military personnel understand the other's language, yet they manage to understand each other — because the issues they discuss are of fundamental importance to both sides.

1 It is telling that, in the film, Kuzmin himself declares: 'We love America. We love this country of brave and honest people — the land of Jack London, Mark Twain, Whitman, Edison and Roosevelt. We love and respect the American people.'

The episodes featuring the American driver construct a multi-layered model of linguistic ideology, in which speech intonation, accent, efforts at mutual understanding, and physical expression serve to delineate boundaries between the Soviet and American allies. When the American first appears on screen, acoustic asymmetry is foregrounded: his speech is loud, growling and aggressive, sharply contrasting with the soft, measured, and intonationally restrained manner of Junior Lieutenant Ivlev. This sets up an ideological opposition — English speech connotes pressure and superficial expressiveness, while Russian speech is associated with responsibility, moral self-control, and semantic depth. However, when the driver realises that he is speaking to a Russian officer, his intonation shifts: the initial shouts of 'Let me alone' vanish, replaced by a more even and almost friendly tone, free from aggression. This transformation suggests that 'American loudness' is not a sign of hostility, but rather a cultural characteristic that can be moderated in situations of mutual respect.

These cultural differences do not prevent the American driver from being a reliable ally and a courageous soldier. What matters most is that he shares the core values for which the Soviet soldiers are fighting. Like them, he believes that a pregnant German woman must be taken to hospital, even at the risk of his own life in the final days of the war. He also believes that a newborn child is a human being who must be saved at all costs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Soviet cinema employed a range of linguistic strategies to construct representations of 'us' and 'them' during the cinematic Cold War. These included language proficiency, accent, pronunciation errors, and errors in lexical choices.

Both Soviet and American films recognised language as a significant ethno-distinctive marker and a key personal attribute. In both cases, the language of 'them' was often depicted as a sign of danger, with political otherness — whether external or internal — reflected in patterns of speech. During periods of warming Soviet Union–United States relations, however, the rehumanisation of 'them' was also facilitated through linguistic means, such as portraying them as linguistically competent and showing that language differences do not necessarily hinder mutual understanding when there is goodwill and a desire for cooperation.

The most striking difference between Soviet and American cinema lies in the portrayal of each other's languages: hostility towards the English language is far less prevalent in Soviet films than hostility towards Russian in American productions. While Russian in Hollywood films is typically used to create a sense of threat or anxiety, English appears in a far broader range of contexts in Soviet cinema. This relatively positive attitude towards English stemmed from the fact that it was not associated solely with 'enemy number one'. English also functioned as a language of international communication — in diplomacy, science, and culture — and was part of the Soviet education system. This difference in linguistic portrayal also reflects broader differences in how the Cold War was conceptualised. From the Soviet perspective, the conflict was rooted primarily in class struggle, rather than national or cultural antagonism. In keeping with the idea of 'two Americas', Soviet audiences could watch scenes of American peace activists demonstrating in New York — such as those shown in the final scenes of *Secret Mission* (*Sekretnaya missiya*, directed by Mikhail Romm, 1950)—under the banner 'Long live peace!'.

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