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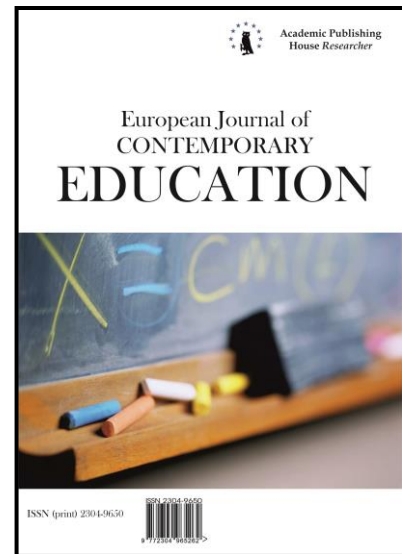
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The Problems of Contemporary Education

Directions, Objectives, and Author's Concepts of Audiovisual Media Interpretations of School and University Theme in the Soviet Cinema of the "Thaw" Period (1956–1968)

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Abstract

The "thaw period" films (1956–1968) on the school/university topic can be conditionally divided into two stages: early (1956–1963) and late "thaw" (1964–1968), although, naturally, there was a somewhat diffusion between these periods. The "thaw" audiovisual texts about school and university life, according to the authorities, were to support the main course of the state policy in the educational and socio-cultural spheres of the time, that is, to show that the Soviet education and culture system is being reformed: 1) the educational process is out of the strict Stalin's framework (while retaining general communist landmarks and a rigid anti-religious orientation); 2) the relationship between teachers and students is becoming more democratic, to some extent, creative, based on the experience of Soviet educators / innovators of the 1920s; 3) there are problem zones at school and university (for example, the taboo was removed from the previous interpretation of a Soviet teacher's image as almost an ideal representative of the most educated part of the people). The first "thaw" stage was more or less characterized by a romantic reliance on the pedagogical experience of revolutionary Soviet pedagogy of the 1920s and the creation of touching lyrical stories, where, despite minor difficulties, the harmony of good teachers and,

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sometimes, flawed and misled at the beginning, but later good students, won. In the course of the second stage of the "thaw", new tendencies began to manifest themselves more often: on the one hand, the crisis, the disappointment and fatigue on the part of teachers, and on the other, the pragmatic cynicism of students.

Keywords: audiovisual text, film, the USSR, school, university, students, pupils, teachers, cinema.

1. Introduction

In this article, we address the goals, objectives, and author's concepts of audiovisual media interpretations of school and university in the Soviet cinema of the "thaw" period (1956-1968). Here, as in our previous work (Fedorov et al., 2017), relying on the technologies developed by C. Bazalgette (Bazalgette, 1995), A. Silverblatt (Silverblatt, 2001: 80-81), W.J. Potter (Potter, 2001) and U. Eco (Eco, 1998; 2005: 209), we conduct a general hermeneutic analysis Soviet feature films, taking into account such key concepts of media education as "media agencies", "media/media text categories", "media technologies", "media languages", "media representations" and "media audiences".

2. Materials and methods

The material of our research is comprised of audiovisual media texts on the theme of school and university. The main method is a comparative hermeneutic analysis of Soviet films of the thaw era (1956–1968) concerning this subject (including: analysis of stereotypes, ideological analysis, identification analysis, iconographic analysis, plot analysis, character analysis, etc.). We also review and analyze books and articles related to school and university in films (Anninsky, 1991; Arcus, 2010; Grigorieva, 2007; Zharikova, 2015; Mitina, 2015; Mykhailin, Belyaeva, 2012; Paramonova, 1975; Pukhachev, 2008; Romanova, 2012; Soloveitchik, 1975; Fedorova, 2012; Shipulina, 2010; Youngblood, 2012; Prokhorov, 2007, etc.).

3. Discussion

The "thaw" (1956–1968) in the USSR quite significantly changed media interpretations of school and university. A characteristic feature of the this period was the so-called "return to Lenin's norms of life," which in practice meant that, politicians tried to take, from their point of view, the most valuable aspects of the 1920s policy. As for the schools – it meant democracy elements in the educational process, a certain, albeit constrained by ideology, creative freedom of teachers and students. As A. Prokhorov aptly notes, films about school in the 1960s reflected the general spirit of the revived utopianism (Prokhorov, 2007).

In this context, it is interesting to compare two films of the 1960s depicting schools of the 1920s: *Beat, the Drum!* (1962) and *Republic of SHKID* (1966).

The first of these films, made during the "early thaw" period, is a mixture of naive (although perhaps timeserving disguised as "naive") ideas of the authors about the total rightness of the communist reformers of the school system (young characters organizing the pioneers' community) and the negative image of the representatives of the old gymnasium (the teacher of mathematics and the best, well-born students of the class).

The second one, on the contrary, (also somewhat naively, but sincerely) asserts the possibility of integration of the best representatives of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia (the principal of school for orphans named after Dostoevsky – Viktor Nikolayevich Sorokin, nicknamed VikNikSor) in the process of creating a new school. VikNikSor in the filigree performance by S. Jursky is "a great idealist and utopian. Vikniksor believes that a person is unique, and the collective of unique people can be an association of creative individuals who do not have to give up themselves and freedom to be together" (Arcus, 2009).

Both films were shot in black and white for a reason, so that the image on the screen reminded viewers of the surviving chronicles of the 1920s. However, against the mediocre visual background of *Beat, the Drum!*, the picture of the *Republic of SHKID* was sophisticated and esthetic, an excellent play of light and shadow referring the audience to the silent film classics. Equally extraordinary was the film montage. Actors' performance in the *Republic of SHKID* was significantly superior to the straightforward interpretation of the characters in *Beat, the Drum!*

As for the use of black and white picture in films depicting schools, in our opinion, it was not always justified. Of course, the intention of the authors of *Beat, the Drum!* (1962) and the *Republic of SHKID* (1966) to produce films resembling a newsreel from the 1920s is understandable. But what drove a director to choose to film in black and white a merry satirical comedy "*Welcome, or No Trespassing!*"? Most of the other films depicting school and university (*Spring in the Riverside Street*, 1956, *See You Next Spring*, 1960; *My Friend, Kolka*, 1961; *Mishka, Serega and I*, 1961; *Wild Dog Dingo*, 1962, *We Love You*, 1962, *Come Tomorrow*, 1962, *Call, open the door*, 1965, *I Loved You ...* (1967), *We'll Live Till Monday*, 1968, *The Transitional Age*, 1968, *The Man-to-Man Talk*, 1968, etc.) could have been color. Apparently, there are good reasons why in the XXI century with the help of computer processing (I think, without any damage to the artistic expression), color versions of the popular films were created – *Spring in the Riverside Street* (1956) and *Come Tomorrow* (1962).

Presumably, Soviet cinematographers of the 1960s were too susceptible to the fashion for the black-and-white stylistics of the French "new wave" and "cinema-verite", believing that modern films about schoolchildren should be as close as possible to the "chronicle" image.

The film *Mishka, Serega and I* (1961) is a vivid example of the school's film interpretation in the initial phase of the "thaw" period. Two conflicts unfold concurrently: 1) an eighth grade boy Igor now and then makes mistakes, taking up with punks, then with a selfish and foppish boxing trainer; 2) a young class teacher cannot establish contact with his eighth grade. In the course of the film viewers see obvious signs of a deficit of socialist times: a queue to buy a TV is so long that shoppers have to come daily to register in the waiting list, and builders fail to finish an apartment house by May 1 without the help of high school children who work there as electrical installers after school. However, conflicts are resolved by the end of the film: the young teacher becomes schoolchildren's favourite, and Igor gives his friends the word to be an exemplary Komsomol member. Notably, before this promise he utters a lofty monologue: "For people like me, there is no place in communism! But without communism I will not live! ... And without the Komsomol I can not live!". Most likely, this phrase appeared in the film as a reaction of scriptwriters to the adoption by the 22nd CPSU Congress (1961) of the Charter of the CPSU, including the Moral Code of the builder of communism, whose material base was promised to be created by 1980.

By the way, the rhetoric about communism in the thaw films depicting education system underwent a curious transformation. While in the picture *Mishka, Serega and I* (1961) these words sound quite seriously, and the drama about parents and children *Big and Small* (1963) ends with pretentious narrative comment: "Why did you not ask yourself: Was I a communist in my family life?", the film *Citizens and Organizations, please note* (1965), produced only two years later, features a high school student who comes up with a device activated by the movement of students along the school corridor which immediately plays a recording of a cheerful voice: "Stop! Are you ready to live and work in communism?", shown with an obvious irony. Two years later the authors of *Valentin Kuzyaev's Personal Life* (1967) went further: in the key episode of the film, located in the television studio, the then popular band "Singing Guitars" is performing a cheerful pro-Communist song with the words: "Do you want to go camping? Yes! Do you want a million? No!", while the main character, a not very intelligent high school student Kuzyaev listens to it without any enthusiasm and, contrary to previous school film standards, he never becomes better than he is by the end of the film.

L. Arcus, in our opinion, very accurately noticed the characteristic feature of the thaw period films about schoolchildren: in the 1960s, not all of them portrayed a non-conformist character being corrected under the influence of mentors, peers and parents. For example, in the film *My friend, Kolka!* (1961) "there is a class of children. There is a boy standing out of the crowd, Kolka Snegirev. But this time he is not a renegade and egoist, but on the contrary – a bright individuality, an artist, a man who searches for truth, and not a form, for real, not imaginary. He requires breathing from life, and sincerity from the people. He is clearly loved by authors and spectators. His class wants to help him, get over troubles – but without the intention to change him, to assimilate with others. They like him the way he is. It's not a fantasy genre, it is a "thaw" period film with its charming ability of wishful thinking" (Arcus, 2009). The truth is, the film did not escape from some treacle, especially in a touchingly happy ending, when Kolka, the founder of the SSoCS (Secret Society of C-Students), deftly defeats carnappers and deserves the gratitude of the police and a vigorous pioneer song of classmates.

Non-standard students with strong personality and subtle inner world were the main characters in many other school films of the 1960s: *Wild Dog Dingo* (1962), *Call, open the door* (1965), *I loved you ...* (1967), *We'll Live Till Monday* (1968), *Transitional Age* (1968), *The Man-to-Man Talk* (1968).

The cinema images of Soviet teachers changed in the thaw period, too. Very important in this respect is the image of a school teacher from the melodrama *Spring in the Riverside Street* (1956). Here, perhaps, for the first time in the Soviet cinema, a story of the student's love for his teacher appeared. Actually, the authors of the film made sure that there was nothing shocking in this situation: the love story unfolds within the walls of the evening school, the students of which are although young, but grown-up people – workers of the metallurgical plant.

Despite the lyrical melodrama of this story, it contained a kind of ideological overtone: in fact, according to the then ideological doctrine, the working class was "the main component of the structure of Soviet society, the bearer of knowledge necessary for Soviet people" and therefore could "teach the teachers (the intelligentsia) what is impossible to learn in any institution: to be a real Soviet person" (Grigorieva, 2007). And the main character – the teacher of the evening school Tatiana – is so young and inexperienced, that is really likely to fall in love with a charming Sasha, her, so-to-speak, "mentor" from the working class. On the other hand, thanks to the talent of the film's creators, the situation was ambiguous: "in a typical melodrama of the 1930s, Sasha would be entrusted with saving Tanya from herself, but *Spring in the Riverside Street* boldly leaves the question of who has improved who open (Youngblood, 2012: 177).

In the earlier mentioned film *My Friend, Kolka!* (1961) the previously unshakably positive image of a teacher / mentor appears in the form of two rival characters: a liberal one and a conservative one. A conservative is the teacher Lydia Mikhailovna. In fact, she and a chairman of the pioneer council Valera Novikov "could become the ideal heroes for films in the previous decades. Always with some unfortunate young character who tore himself away from the collective and placed own interests above the interests of the class and school, there appeared to a number of wiser and more reasonable teachers and comrades ready to teach a harsh moral lesson, threatening to expel from school or exclude from pioneers or Komsomol members. But Lydia Mikhailovna and Valera Novikov are not portrayed as ideal carriers of collective wisdom" (Artemieva, 2015: 54-55): an active public figure and an excellent student Valera is a cynical informer, while a teacher is an avid party functionary (she coordinates all her work with the opinion of the district committee of the CPSU) and a retrograde.

Liberal vs. conservative pedagogical conflicts arose later in the films *My name is Kogea* (1963), *Trains go past the windows* (1965), *We'll live till Monday* (1968) and many others.

In particular, in the drama *Trains Go by the Windows* (1965), the headmaster of a provincial boarding school, remarkably performed by L. Krugly, at first seems to be a positive democrat and a wise mentor for children and teens, while a traditional duo of a conservative middle aged school teacher and a young teacher (a recent graduate of the university) unfolds along. However, gradually, the image of the ironic headmaster gives away the authoritarian features of a tough, soulless manager, and he turns out to be much more dangerous for a young heroine than explicit conservatives.

Seemingly an outspoken conservative and a negative character in the satirical comedy *Welcome, or No Trespassing!* (1964) – the principal of the pioneer summer camp Dynin, brilliantly performed by Y. Evstigneev, is also not so straightforward: he sincerely desires that the institution entrusted to him is kept in order (though supported by denunciations), so that schoolchildren get full nutrition (and not chat while eating), play active games (but quietly), bathe in the river (under supervision and in shallow parts), watch movies in the evenings (but without love episodes).

Another negative image of a teacher, however presented more harshly, appeared in the film *What if it's love?* (1961). There's a scandal at school: a strict teacher of the German language gets a love letter, written by a high school senior Boris addressed to his classmate Ksenia. Ideologically brought up Maria Pavlovna is certainly very worried: honour and moral standards of Soviet school are challenged. Thus, due to her interference, relationships of Ksenia and Boris are being discussed by school faculty, their classmates, parents, and neighbours.

Today the conflict of the film by Y. Raizman *What if it's love?* seems to be trifle: school seniors date, so what? However in 1961 things were different. The problem of the first teenage love,

that fell under the social pressure, was discussed earnestly in almost all press. In a word, this film had about the same resonance in the 1960s, as *Little Vera* in the end of the 1980s.

Sexual motif was, perhaps, the boldest one in the Raizman's film, because strict Stalin's censorship that ruled in the 1930s-1950s, did not let premarital sexual contacts between school students (and youth in general) on the screen. It was only in the NEP (New Economic Policy in Russia in the 1920s) period that Soviet cinema could afford making such a film as *A Prostitute* (1927). In the sound Soviet cinema (until the Perestroika), love affairs of young women could only be depicted in retro period films, such as film adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's (*Resurrection*) and Panas Mirny's *Hooker*, where main characters were young "fallen" women, but action took place, naturally, during the times of "hated Tsar's regime".

We agree with an opinion that the motif of sexual guilt was born by the Soviet culture's Puritanism, grounded in the 1930s both socialistically and socially realistically. In the 1960s the love language was slowly rehabilitated, but the sex language only remains to exist within medical or obscene vocabularies. According to Maria Pavlovna and Ksenia's mother, sex before marriage is something catastrophically amoral. "Better" characters (for example, a young teacher) clean Boris and Ksenia's love of suspicions in "this". The thaw period film criticism followed the same route" ([Romanova, 2012: 192](#)). Sexual context in school films was so important for Soviet society and state, that it was argued about in the Central Committee of CPSU, in the Ministry of Culture and The Cinematographers' Union. As a result, the film scene of intimacy between Boris and Ksenia was cut shorter and voiced over.

Lev Anninsky wrote that "the message of Raizman's film is that he plunged the plot in the atmosphere of thick everyday life, social force, rigid predetermination, small pinpricks that people stung, killed the feeling with" ([Anninsky, 1991: 82](#)). Iconographic analysis of the drama *What if it's love?* reveals its other differences from "thaw" optimism. Black-and-white visual picture distinctly portrays gloomy ill-provision, as though borrowed from the famous black sequence of Polish cinema of the late 1950s: black windows of the new, still not inhabited flats, dusty grounds around apartment buildings, windy emptiness around the new neighbourhood ([Romanova, 2012: 194](#)). Moreover, it turns out that a lot of secondary film characters are united not because of mutual positive values, but because of their desire to hurt the feelings of vulnerable teens in love.

Surprisingly, a melodrama *Story of the First Love* (1957), produced 4 years earlier, did not give rise to such censorship tornado, although it contained such plot twists that in our opinion, could have shocked the chaste Soviet public: 1) a ninth grader falls in love with his classmate and he wins her affection, too; 2) a PE teacher openly pesters his pretty student; 3) defending his girlfriend's honour, the main character courageously fights against an indecent teacher. One has to agree that no Soviet film about school until the 1980s depicted anything like the second and the third point. However, unlike Y. Raizman's film, *Story of the First Love* didn't contain any sexual scenes, and most importantly, all the plot's rough angles were smoothed by the soft lyricism of a melodrama, where even the "bad guy" PE teacher sincerely sings a hit song "Why, oh, why, I don't know, I believed your blue eyes..." The actors' age, performing ninth graders was deliberately distanced from school: J. Osmolovskaya was 19, K. Stolyarov – 20, and V. Zemlyanikin – 24.

The film made by the end of the thaw period – *We'll live till Monday* (1968), defined the authors' understanding of the Soviet school crisis as a model of the state crisis. L. Arcus accurately points out that a History teacher Melnikov in this drama is a kind of a white crow, an outsider: "almost invisible ripple of anguish runs through his face: because of ignorance ("There is no such a verb in the Russian language, my dear, save our ears"), because of vulgarity ("Baratynsky is a poet of the secondary importance"), of silliness ("Folly should be a fool's private property"), of lies and profanation of his subject ("Look at the textbook published this year"). In rendering it sounds like dissidentism, but Tikhonov succeeds most in expressing the state of hopeless torment when he's silent. It's amazing, what acting school we have lost! There are a lot of close-ups in the film, and one can write a book about the ways Tikhonov *watches*. The way he looks at his students: at a poet Genka Shestopal, he sees himself as if in the mirror; at a cynical handsome guy Batischev – seeing an eternal opponent. He watches his whole class at the end of the film having a presentiment of what is going to happen to each of them, and being aware that nothing could be changes. The main colour of his portrait is ash fatigue" ([Arcus, 2009](#)). This having no alternative weariness explains why a bachelor Melnikov is not in a hurry to return affection of a pretty English teacher, why in

spite of his intense longing for a different job, he continues teaching History lessons, subjected to political climate.

On the other hand, there's something "unprofessional" about Melnikov. He looked at school as if from the outside, and he taught a lesson as though it was his first day in class and he came across the emotional deafness of pupils for the first time" (Soloveichik, 1975).

Though his main pedagogical opponent, a Literature teacher Svetlana Mikhailovna is "limited, teaches her subject "from here to here", dryasdust, self righteous, and avidly follows instructions, apart from other film teachers in the past, she has neither jolly enthusiasm, nor fanaticism. Only loneliness and again, fatigue" (Arcus, 2009).

Thus, *We'll live till Monday* no less than M. Khutsiev's masterpiece *July Rain* (1966), finely demonstrated the crisis (or even the collapse) of "thaw" ideals in Soviet intelligentsia, who sharper than others felt the essence of regressive political, social and cultural tendencies in the USSR.

Nevertheless, the major "thaw" school film, in the allegoric form having depicted the bureaucratic model of the authoritarian Soviet state, was a bold comedy *Welcome, or no Trespassing!* directed by Elem Klimov based on the script by Semyon Lungin and Ilya Nusinov.

Perhaps we can agree with the opinion that the main technique in the film is an oxymoron, a combination of the incongruous: "the film's title is positioned in the frame as a political satire: the sign "Welcome" with a shining sun adorns the tightly closed gates of the camp (the most deft, however, know where you can climb through a hole in the fence). Lower is an peephole with the suspicious word "or"; and, finally, at the bottom – "No Trespassing"; all together is a typical example of foreign policy of the socialism times. The word "or" allows one to assume a choice between both parts of the name, and equate them with the meaning "that is" (Fedorova, 2012: 218).

Soviet censorship, of course, went through this film of E. Klimov with his unwavering ideological hand, but did not succeed in deciphering the essence of the satirical film text to the full extent.

For example, many scenes of E. Klimov's film feature a persistent overhead slogan: "Children are the masters of our camp!", that, on the one hand, caused associations with the state, built by the camp type, and on the other hand, it hinted at the sheer hypocrisy of using the word "masters" in it, since in the USSR the real masters of life were party bosses and bureaucrats, and not workers, peasants and their children.

Unlike the period of the 1920s – early 1950s, the Soviet cinema of the "thaw" era increasingly touched upon the subject of university. Sometimes in the comedic genre (*Come Tomorrow*, 1962, *Madness*, 1965), but mostly in the (melo) dramatic (*Different Fates*, 1956, *They Met on the Way*, 1957, *The City lights up*, 1958, *Peers*, 1958, 1, *Newton Street*, 1963).

In the films *Different Fates* (1956), *The City lights up* (1958) and *Peers* (1958), the theme of the university played a marginal role. In the melodrama *They met on the Way* (1957) – is was the key one. The girl who successfully entered the pedagogical college gives a helping hand to the worker who failed the entrance exams, as a result, the young tutor and her student fall in love with each other, and the latter, of course, becomes a successful student next year. In between, a cute career-centered student deserves public condemnation, and a gray-bearded "old school" professor sings songs together with his students. In a word, the film, although from the "thaw" period, was absolutely tied (both by the plot and style) to the late Stalin's epoch.

In the popular musical comedy *Come Tomorrow* (1962) a provincial girl Frosya, thanks to innate vocal abilities, enters the conservatory and, despite all sorts of obstacles and absurdities, eventually becomes a favorite of a wise teacher. A film with such a simple story and with such a heroine could have also appeared in the late 1940s, 1950s, and even in the 1970s.

Another film about students is 1, *Newton Street* (1963). It also tells a story of a provincial guy who enters a university in the capital, but in the genre of a drama. Student Timothy faces a serious life test: his scientific work, written together with a classmate, wins a prestigious competition, but ... soon it turns out that it contains an awkward mistake. A weak classmate begs Timofey not to tell anyone about this, but he rejects this dishonest proposal and leaves for his hometown, where, he works on a new version of scientific work. Perhaps, there are no particular hallmarks of the thaw period. Stories about high tones students, for whom the truth is the most valuable asset, often unfolded in (audiovisual) texts both in Stalin's times and in post-thaw times, too. Only some details in 1, *Newton Street* give us a hint about its historical background: poets performing at the Mayakovsky's monument, Y. Kim's songs and expressive camera work.

4. Results

The "thaw period" films (1956–1968) on the school/university topic

Place of action, historical, social, cultural, political, and ideological context

1. *Historical context (dominant concepts: "media agencies", "media categories", "media representations" and "media audiences").*

a) features of the historical period when media texts were created, market conditions that contributed to the idea, the process of creating media texts, the degree of influence of that time on media texts.

The timeframe for the historical period of the "thaw" has been defined conditionally from 1956 (denunciation of Stalin's personality cult at the XX Congress of the CPSU) to 1968 (the invasion of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia).

The main characteristics of this historical period:

- condemnation of Stalin's personality cult;
- end of mass terror of the state's citizens, while maintaining a "milder" struggle (which, as a rule, did not involve prolonged imprisonment and physical extermination) with dissenters (like Boris Pasternak, Andrei Sinyavsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, and others);
- the continuation of the process of industrialization (mainly heavy and military industries);
- agricultural reforms (development of virgin lands, creation of economic councils, etc.);
- realization of the state program of mass housing construction;
- a successful start of the "space era" (launching the world's first satellite, the world's first cosmonaut);
- renewal of the communist ideology, oriented to the works of V. Lenin and post-Stalinist ideologists, with less intense than, for example, in the 1920s, but still open fight against religion;
- official theses about the established unified community of the Soviet people and the absence in the USSR of class, ethnic, national, and racial problems;
- the rejection of the idea of the world revolution and the proletariat's dictatorship, replacing it with the idea of a "peaceful coexistence of socialist and capitalist systems" (which, of course, did not exclude the ideological confrontation against bourgeois states, the militarization, unleashing local military conflicts, intervention in Hungary (1956) and Czechoslovakia (1968), military and economic support of pro-communist regimes in developing countries, for example, in Cuba).
- a drastic growth of film production, the resumption of the Moscow International Film Festival;
- expansion (still with censorship) of scope of creative freedom in the cultural sphere, including literature, theater and cinema;
- the gradual curtailment of the "thaw" tendencies (including the cinema), the reduction of the criticism of Stalinism (after Leonid Brezhnev came to power in October 1964) against the backdrop of solemn celebrations of Soviet communist jubilees on a national scale.

"The Law on Strengthening the School's Contact with Life and on the Further Development of the Public Education System in the USSR" (1958) began another reform of the Soviet educational system. The obligatory education was 8 years. An 11-year program incorporating vocational (two days a week) as well as academic training replaced the traditional ten-year primary and secondary general school. The role and share (up to 15 %) of vocational training in the educational process sharply increased. It was assumed that schoolchildren will work twice a week in special training workshops (or plants/factories), and General Certificate of Education will be supplemented with a certificate of the acquired vocational qualification. By 1962 all seven-year-schools were turned into eight-year schools. However, it soon became clear that enhancement of labor training had a negative effect: the level of knowledge of students in basic subjects dropped. That is why, in September 1966, the Soviet school returned to a ten year program again, and the idea of professional training within the school curriculum, was left behind.

Table 1. Key dates and events in the USSR and the world in the "thaw" period (1956–1968): politics, economy, and culture

Years	Key dates and events in the USSR and the world in the "thaw" period (1956–1968): politics, economy, and culture
1956	<p>Khrushchev's secret speech, denouncing the deceased Joseph Stalin made to a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union: February 25.</p> <p>Pro-Stalin's riots in Tbilisi: March.</p> <p>"Cominform" (Communist Information Bureau) was dissolved: April 17.</p> <p>Resolution of the CPSU Central Committee "On Overcoming the Personality Cult and Its Consequences": June 30.</p> <p>The cancellation of tuition fees in the senior classes of secondary school, as well as in secondary special and higher educational institutions of the USSR : September.</p> <p>The Hungarian Revolution: October 23 – November 9.</p> <p>The Suez crisis in Egypt: October 30 – December 22.</p> <p>The High Courses for Film Directors (higher education establishment) opened in Moscow: November.</p>
1957	<p>Letter of CPSU Central Committee about "Fostering political work of party organizations among masses and suppression of attacks of anti-Soviet hostile elements": January.</p> <p>Plenum of CPSU Central Committee on Literature and Art: June 22-29.</p> <p>The exclusion from the leadership of the CPSU of the "anti-party opposition" (G. Malenkov, V. Molotov, L. Kaganovich, D. Shepilov): June 29.</p> <p>World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow: July 28-August 11.</p> <p>A test of the first Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the territory of the United States.</p> <p>The successful launch of the world's first artificial satellites: October - November.</p> <p>The publication in the western countries of the novel by B. Pasternak <i>Doctor Zhivago</i>: November.</p>
1958	<p>The Soviet film <i>The Cranes Are Flying</i> is awarded the main prize of the Cannes Film Festival – Palme d'Or: May.</p> <p>Exhibition of American abstractionists in Moscow.</p> <p>The opening of the monument of V. Mayakovsky in Moscow, where poets freely performed: July.</p> <p>The award of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Boris Pasternak - "For significant achievements in contemporary lyrical poetry, as well as for the continuation of the traditions of the great Russian epic novel" (<i>Doctor Zhivago</i>). The denunciation of Boris Pasternak by the USSR authorities and the leaders of the Union of Soviet Writers: October.</p> <p>Boris Pasternak is expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union: October 27.</p> <p>"The law on strengthening the school's connection with life and the further development of the system of public education in the USSR": December 24.</p> <p>Adoption of the "Fundamentals of Criminal Legislation", abolishing the concept of "enemy of the people", raising the age of criminal liability from 14 to 16: December 25.</p>
1959	<p>The victory of pro-communist revolutionaries in Cuba: January 1.</p> <p>Order of the Minister of Culture of the USSR "On serious shortcomings of ideological and educational work in the All-Union State Institute of Cinematography": January 18.</p> <p>XXI Congress of the CPSU: the proclamation of the complete and final victory of socialism: January 27 – February 5.</p> <p>Opening of the American exhibition in Moscow: July 25.</p> <p>The First Moscow International Film Festival: August 3–17.</p> <p>Negotiations between Nikita Khrushchev and D. Eisenhower in the United States: September 15–27.</p>
1960	<p>Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On the tasks of party propaganda in the modern conditions": January 9.</p>

	<p>The U.S. spy plane, piloted by G. Powers is shot down: May 1.</p> <p>The election of L.I. Brezhnev as the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR: May 4.</p> <p>Opening of the Higher two-year scriptwriters' courses in Moscow: November 1.</p>
1961	<p>Soviet note of protest to US President J. Kennedy, related to the the anti-Castro landing in Cuba: April 8.</p> <p>Launch of the world's first Soviet spacecraft with a man on board: April 12.</p> <p>Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR "On Strengthening the Struggle Against Persons Who Avoid Socially Useful Work and Lead an Antisocial Parasitic Way of Life": May 4.</p> <p>The beginning of the construction of the Berlin Wall: August 13.</p> <p>XXII Congress of the CPSU. Adoption of the new Program and the new Charter of the CPSU. Decision on the removal of Stalin's remains from the tomb in Mausoleum: October 7–31.</p>
1962	<p>The increase in prices for meat (by 30 %) and milk (by 25 %) in the USSR: June 1.</p> <p>The demonstration of Novocherkassk workers who protested the increase for food prices is dispersed by gunfire: June 2.</p> <p>Decree of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On measures to improve the leadership of the artistic cinematography": July 19.</p> <p>Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On increasing the effectiveness of statements by the Soviet press": September 18.</p> <p>After the start of the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba, the US declares a sea blockade of the island. The politically tense Caribbean crisis begins, which forces the USSR to remove missiles from Cuba in exchange for the US promise to abandon the occupation of the "Island of Freedom": October 14 – November 20.</p> <p>"New World" journal publishes Alexander Solzhenitsyn's novel <i>One Day of Ivan Denisovich</i>: November.</p> <p>Nikita Khrushchev visits an exhibition of Moscow artists in the Manege (today Moscow Art Exhibition): December 1.</p>
1963	<p>The meeting of the leadership of the CPSU with the creative intelligentsia of the USSR in the Kremlin: March 7–8.</p> <p>Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR "On measures for the further development of higher and secondary education": May 9.</p> <p>Reaching the agreement between the USSR and the United States on creating a "hot" telephone line between Moscow and Washington: June 20.</p> <p>Resolution of the plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On the forthcoming tasks of the party's ideological work": June.</p> <p>Jamming of the Voice of America, BBC and German Wave programs in Russian on the territory of the USSR ceased.</p> <p>The assassination of the US President J. Kennedy in Dallas: November 24.</p>
1964	<p>Report of the KGB to the Central Committee of the CPSU on the anti-Soviet attitudes of VGIK students.</p> <p>Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On the film studio Mosfilm": February 3.</p> <p>The US starts the war in Vietnam: August 2.</p> <p>Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU removes Nikita Khrushchev from power and elect Leonid Brezhnev the First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee: October 14.</p>
1965	<p>Alexey Leonov, leaving his spacecraft for 12 minutes, becomes the first person to walk in space: March 18.</p> <p>The USSR supplies missiles to North Vietnam: April 5.</p> <p>David Lean's film of <i>Doctor Zhivago</i>, starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie, is released: December.</p>

1966	France withdraws from the NATO military organization: February 21. XXIII Congress of the CPSU: March 29 – April 8. The visit of French President General de Gaulle to Moscow: June 20 – July 1.
1967	Six-day war in the Middle East, breaking diplomatic relations between Israel and the USSR: July 5–10. Resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU "On measures for the further development of social sciences and enhancing their role in communist construction": August 14. Solemn celebration of the 50th anniversary of Soviet power: November.
1968	Order Committee on Cinematography of the USSR "On the purchase and rental of foreign films" (for the purpose of excluding the penetration of bourgeois propaganda on the Soviet screen): July 31. "Student Revolution" in Paris: May. The resumption of the USSR jamming the broadcasts of "Voice of America" and other western radio stations in Russian on the USSR territory: August 20. The invasion of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia: August 21. The publication of A. Solzhenitsyn's <i>The First Circle</i> abroad: December.

Soviet "thaw" audiovisual texts on the subject of school and university, according to the authorities, were supposed to support the main lines of the then state policy in the educational and socio-cultural spheres, that is, to show that the Soviet system of education, upbringing and culture is being reformed, and namely:

- the educational process goes beyond the previous strict framework of the Stalinist rules (while maintaining common communist landmarks and a rigid anti-religious orientation);
- the relationships between teachers and students are becoming more democratic, creative, based on the experience of Soviet pedagogues – innovators of the 1920s;
- there are some problem zones at school and university (in particular, the interpretation of the image of the Soviet teacher as an ideal representative of the educated part of the society was de-idealized).

Genre modifications of school and university subjects: drama, detective, less often – melodrama, comedy.

b) how does the knowledge of true historical events of a particular period help to understand the given media texts, examples of historical references in these media texts.

In the films *Flags on the Towers* (1958), *Beat, the Drum!* (1962), *The First Teacher* (1966), *Republic of SHKID* (1966), the pioneer movement of the 1920s and the pedagogical direction of Soviet teachers (like A. Makarenko, V. Soroka-Rosinsky, etc.) was shown as a positive approach. The films *Clouds over Borsk* (1960), *Miraculous* (1960), *Sinful Angel* (1962), consistently reflected the anti-religious state policy. The films *Welcome, or No Trespassing!* (1964), *Trains Go by the Windows* (1965) and *We'll Live till Monday* (1968), featured some teachers with serious professional flaws. *Story of the First Love* (1957), *What if it's love?* (1961), *Wild Dog Dingo* (1962), *I Loved You...* (1967) depicted the problem of love relations between high school students.

In the Soviet films of the "thaw" period, schoolchildren, of course, could be featured sitting in meetings, condemning someone for misconduct (for instance, religiosity or laziness). But on the whole, the cinematic focus of the interpretation of the school and university theme shifted towards the ordinary school life, to the development of the personality (*Wild Dog Dingo*", 1962, *The Gulf Stream* (1968), *We'll Live Till Monday*, 1968, *The Man-to Man Talk*, 1968, *Transitional Age*, 1968, etc.), to the examination of the inner world of teachers (*Trains Go by the Windows*, 1965, *The First Teacher*, 1966, *We'll Live Till Monday*, 1968, *Literature Lesson* (1968), etc. At the same time, schoolchildren (unlike their film counterparts in the 1920s and 1930s) no longer appeared on the screen as some sort of conductors of the communist tomorrow, leading the lost adults on the right track.

2. *Socio-cultural, ideological, religious context (dominant concepts: "media agencies", "media categories", "media representations" and "media audience").*

a) *ideology, directions, goals, objectives, world outlook, the concepts of the media texts' authors in the socio-cultural context; ideology, culture of the world, depicted in these media texts.*

In the period of the thaw, communist ideology (including anti-capitalist, anti-religious orientation, the theory of socialist realism) in the USSR continued to dominate. Filmmaking was also under censorship (albeit less strict than in the 1930s and 1940s). Therefore the authors of the majority of audiovisual media texts on the school-university theme were to comply with these rules of the game. In fact, in some films (such as, *Welcome, or No Trespassing!*, 1964, *We'll Live Till Monday*, 1968, *Literature Lesson*, 1968), these rules were violated by certain oddities that arose, as it seemed, in spite of the genre or thematic field, say - whimsical rhythms, fancies of intonation, figurative accents in "wrong" places or seemingly irrelevant artistic arrangement of the narrative. Film viewers who anticipated to watch another innocent drama soon began to feel uncomfortable. They could not help feeling that though everything seemed to be clear and correct in the film, yet something was wrong, something was subtly annoying and makes the perception unsettled (Kovalov, 2016: 11).

b) the world outlook of the characters in media texts about school

In general, the worldview of the characters of audiovisual media texts on the theme of school and university during the thaw, as in the previous three decades, was optimistic, at that time the optimism was connected with the prospects of building "socialism with a human face". Students - vivid personalities were often ridden by doubts (*Wild Dog Dingo, I loved you...*, *We'll live till Monday*, etc.). Doubts and reflections were also characteristic of screen teachers, too (*Trains go by the windows, We'll Live Till Monday, Literature Lesson*, etc.).

At first glance, the hierarchy of values, according to this world view, has remained the same: communist ideology, collectivism, diligence, honesty, atheism, willingness to give a helping hand to good or flawed people. But there were also new colors: audiovisual media texts virtually didn't portray hatred of the internal class enemies, the heroism of the students gave way to everyday events (including first school love); at the same time, the level of critical reflection of reality has noticeably risen. For example, a school teacher from the witty comedy "Literature Lesson" not only openly dislikes his randomly chosen profession, but sets himself the task of living for at least one day ... without lying (of course, it was for this seditious intention that the film was banned for screening).

Thus, it was the model of "socialism with a human face," rather than classical communist ideals, that determined the world view of the characters in the audiovisual "school world" of the thaw period. And it was this model that quickly began to disappear when the end of the thaw by the Brezhnev regime after the events in Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Soviet tanks were brought into Prague in fear that "socialism with a human face" could win in a single state.

3. Structure and narrative modes in media texts (dominant concepts: "media categories", "media technologies", "media languages", "media representations")

Schematically, the structure, plot, representativeness, ethics, genre modifications, iconography, characters of audiovisual media texts about school and university in "thaw" period can be presented as follows:

a) *the location and time period in media texts*. Leaving aside the plots where schoolchildren and students appeared (often episodically) only outside the walls of educational institutions (let us recall, Valery, the schoolboy from the *Elusive Avengers* who, fighting the enemies of Soviet state, actually never appear at school), one can say that the main location in films on the school theme of the "thaw" era is school classes and corridors, and the plot is set mostly (if it's not a retro about 1920s) at the time when the film is made.

b) *the environment typical for these media texts, household items*: the furnishings and household items of school films are still modest, at times ascetic (as, for example, in *The First Teacher*).

It is very indicative that in Soviet films on the school topic in many cases "there is no private space for a teenager – his room. Most often because of its actual absence due to the poor housing situation in the country, but even when the room is there, nothing there characterizes the owner. It's just a room with a bed and a desk, there is not the slightest attribute of its owner. ... The commitment for intellectual and high culture and the neglect of interior and decor. The same reason is why a fashionably dressed character is almost always negative" (Zharikova, 2015: 62).

c) *genre modifications: mostly drama, sometimes melodrama or comedy*.

d) *(stereotyped) devices to depict reality*: positive characters are less often shown as idealized, while negative ones, on the contrary, have deeper dimensions than just a caricature.

However, relapses, of course, are possible. For example, in the professionally helpless *Boys* (1959), a cheesy teacher brings to the class a model of the space satellite, thus causing a sensation in the class only consisting of diligent and perfect schoolchildren. And in the detective story *Shadows of an Old Castle* (1966), a super-positive teacher who instantly finds contact with schoolchildren takes a job in an Estonian boarding school located in an ancient castle, very soon finds out that the key faculty members (presented rather grotesquely) are former Nazis and treacherous enemies of Soviet power.

e) *character typology (character traits, clothing, physique, vocabulary, facial expressions, key gestures, presence or absence of the stereotypical manner of representing the characters in these media texts):*

- the age of characters: the age of schoolchildren is in the range of 7–17 years, however, teenagers are more common. The age of the adult characters (teachers, parents, grandparents, etc.) can be anything, but adults below 60 prevail;

- the education level: for schoolchildren it corresponds to their class; the teachers presumably graduated from higher education institution, supporting characters can have any level of education;

- social status, occupation: the financial situation of the students is approximately the same, they can be either from the families of workers and farmers, or from the intelligentsia. The professions of their parents are in a fairly diverse range.

- the marital status of the characters: schoolchildren, naturally, are not bound by marriage; adult characters are mostly married, however, single teachers appear in film more frequently;

- appearance, clothes, body build, features of their characters, vocabulary: the appearance of schoolchildren and students in the films of the "thaw" period is in the framework of then popular ideas about how the students should look (for example, wearing school uniform was obligatory).

A shot from the movie *What if it's love?* (1961) gives a good idea of the appearance, clothes, physique of characters – schoolchildren.

School children in the thaw films are mostly not so purposeful, bold, polite and active as their peers from the moving pictures in the 1930s, but on the whole they remain optimistic about life. However, more and more often negative characters appear, the hopes for reformation of whom are not as big as they used to be.

Teachers from the films of the early thaw period look similar to those in the 1930s and 1940s: they were distinguished by modesty in clothes. Teachers' clothes don't follow fashion. They look more like a uniform: a dark suit, a skirt/trousers and a jacket with a white or light blouse, classical shoes. Classical hairdo for a female teacher is a hair bun (Tatiana Sergeevna (a teacher from the film *Spring in the Riverside Street – A.F. & A.L.*) at home walks around with loose hair, but she gathers it in a bun every time she goes to work)" (Grigorieva, 2007).

Late thaw film teachers are no longer perceived by unambiguous symbols of the struggle for communism, they have lost an ideal halo, and more often they are in doubts, discontent with their life. Another serious, symptomatic for modern culture as a whole, a social problem, articulated by Soviet cinema, is a social gap decrease between a teacher and a student (Shipulina, 2010). In particular, in the comedy *Literature Lesson* (1968), a young teacher is on back-slapping terms with a struggling student.

A shot from the movie *We'll Live Till Monday* (1968) reflects the appearance, clothes, physique of the characters-teachers of the late thaw years.

Negative image of school and teachers of the "tsarist regime" in the thaw period occupied a marginal place in Soviet cinema (*The First Bastille*, 1965).

f) *a significant change in the life of media characters:* schoolchildren live a normal life, but among them there are students who: learn poorly (*Big and Small*, 1963, *Attention, Citizens and Organizations*, 1965; *Three and a half days from the life of Ivan Semyonov, a second-grader and a repeater*, 1966), behave badly (*My name is Kogia*, 1963, *Three and a half days from the life of Ivan Semyonov, a second-grader and a repeater*, 1966), are exposed to bad influence (*Mishka, Serega and I*, 1961), become religious (*Clouds over Borsk*, 1960, *Miraculous*, 1960), lay hands on other people's money (*We love you*, 1962), fall in love earlier the due age (*Story of the First Love*, 1957, *What if it's love?*, 1961, *Wild Dog Dingo*, 1963, *I loved you*, 1967).

j) *the challenge that the characters face:* disturbance of the habitual life, because a character, for different reasons not fitting into the standard framework of school life, shows up.

i) *solving the problem*: early thaw period: "correct" characters (schoolchildren, teachers, parents) individually or together, return nonconformist schoolchildren to ordinary life (*My Name is Kogia*, 1963, *Three and a half days from the life of Ivan Semenov, a second grader and a repeater*, 1966, *Mishka, Serega and I*, 1961, etc.); peak and decline of the thaw: negative characters (conservative teachers, parents, counselors and other retrogrades) successfully or unsuccessfully try to restore the status quo (*What if it's Love*, 1961, *My friend, Kolka!* .. 1961, *Welcome, or No Trespassing!*, 1964, *Trains Go by the Windows*, 1965).

5. Conclusion

In summary, the "thaw period" films (1956–1968) concerning school/university can be conditionally divided into two stages: early (1956–1963) and late (1964–1968), although, of course, there was a certain diffusion between the cinematography of these periods.

These audiovisual texts, according to the authorities, were supposed to support the main state policy in the educational and socio-cultural spheres, that is, to show that the Soviet system of education, upbringing and culture is being reformed: 1) the educational process goes beyond the previous strict framework of the Stalinist rules (while maintaining common communist landmarks and a rigid anti-religious orientation); 2) the relationships between teachers and students are becoming more democratic, creative, based on the experience of Soviet pedagogues – innovators of the 1920s; 3) there are some problem zones at school and university (in particular, the interpretation of the image of the Soviet teacher as an ideal representative of the educated part of the society was de-idealized).

The early thaw stage was characterized by a romantic reliance on the pedagogical experience of the revolutionary Soviet pedagogy of the 1920s and the creation of touching lyrical stories, where, despite minor difficulties, the harmony of good teachers and, at first, stumbling but in the end, good students, won.

During the second stage of the thaw, new tendencies were manifested increasingly frequent: on the one hand, the crisis, the disillusionment and fatigue of teachers, and on the other hand, the pragmatic cynicism of students.

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