Cold War and civil liberties, yesterday and today in *Bridge of Spies*

Guerra Fria e liberdades civis, ontem e hoje em Ponte dos Espiões

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Abstract: we seek to expose how Steven Spielberg, a popular filmmaker with a filmography filled with historical films, addresses the Cold War in *Bridge of Spies* (2015) and how the director associates that period with the defense of civil liberties. We selected a few excerpts from the film and sought to indicate the visual forms constructed by the filmmaker for a historical event that lead a lawyer to defend a soviet spy in 1957, with use of plane composition, camera movements, lighting, colors and the character's appearance. We also relate the film to the moment it was released, a period of hostilities between the United States and Russia.

Keywords: Spielberg; history; Cold War; civil liberties; espionage.

Resumo: procuramos expor como Steven Spielberg, cineasta de apelo popular, com uma filmografia repleta de filmes históricos, aborda a Guerra Fria em *Ponte dos Espiões* (2015) e como o diretor associa aquele período à defesa das liberdades civis. Selecionamos alguns trechos do filme e buscamos indicar cinematograficamente – na composição dos planos, movimentos de câmera, iluminação, cores e pelo olhar dos personagens – as formas visuais construídas pelo cineasta para um acontecimento histórico que levou um advogado a defender um espião soviético em 1957. Também conectamos o filme ao momento em que foi lançado, de hostilidades entre Estados Unidos e Rússia.

Palavras-chave: Spielberg; história; Guerra Fria; liberdades civis; espionagem.

Steven Spielberg is the contemporary filmmaker who works the most with the history and politics of his own country, in films of great circulation – created within the studio system –, popularity and critical repercussion, with narratives built in classical tradition, often covered by the codes of melodrama. Since the 1980s, when the filmmaker achieved immense notoriety, his films became "more historical and more political" (WASSER, 2010, p. 2), making him the Hollywoodian filmmaker who "explains America to the world and gives the American perspective on world events" (WASSER, 2010, p. 3)[2].

World War II is present in his films directly, as in *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) or in productions with historical ambience, such as the three titles about the character Indiana Jones[3] and *Empire of the Sun* (1987). The Holocaust was approached by the director in *Schindler's List* (1993) – although the emphasis is on the redemption narrative of a Czech businessman who saves Jews. Slavery, a theme of debates within the legislature in *Lincoln* (2012), was represented in *Amistad* (1997); *War Horse* (2012), which goes on during World War I; And *Munich* (2005), which touches on the subject of the controversial conflict between Israel and Palestine. More recently, the filmmaker approached press freedom around the American intervention in Vietnam in *The Post* (2018).

In this article, we approach another of Spielberg's historical production, *Bridge of Spies* (2015), in which we seek to expose how he deals with the period of the Cold War. Through the resources of film analysis, we selected sequences that demonstrate how the director recreates the climate of tension faced with the possibility of a nuclear conflict, especially on children. We also focus on excerpts that address civil liberties, East Berlin, an attempt to escape, and the judgments of spies.

Initially, a brief context of the conflict and its impact on cinema. In general, we understand by Cold War the ideological, political, military, economic, and cultural polarization played by the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) with their respective allies, which goes from the years following the end of World War II until the fall of the Berlin Wall in November

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[2] Other contemporary American directors also show interest in the past, such as Oliver Stone, the historian-filmmaker (Rosentone, 2012), who creates alternative and complex visions of events of patriotic and emotional appeal such as the death of Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and the former Presidents Richard Nixon and George Bush.

[3] *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1984), and *Indiana Jones and the Last Cruzade* (1989).

1989[4]. It was "[...] a historical period dating from approximately 1947 to the breakdown of the Soviet World (1989-1991)" (MUNHOZ, 2004, p. 264). The conflict was essentially sustained by a constant threat of nuclear attacks from both sides – fostered and fueled by mass media and cinema. "It did not happen, but for some forty years it looked a daily possibility.", recalls Hobsbawm (1994, p. 179).

Open conflict was avoided, the global map was divided between the spheres of influence of the two powers and armed combats were fought in post-colonial territories. The crusade character between the free, democratic, and capitalist world against the socialist dictatorship was sustained on the western side. It was more of a backstage war, discreetly starred by individuals and intelligence operations on both sides.

> The Cold War that actually tried to live up to its own rhetoric of a struggle for supremacy or annihilation was not the one in which basic decisions were taken by governments, but the shadowy contest between their various acknowledged and unacknowledged secret services, which in the West produced that most characteristic spin-off of the international tension, the fiction of espionage and covert killing. In this genre the British, through Ian Fleming's James Bond and John Le Carre's sour-sweet heroes - both had served their time in the British secret services – maintained a steady superiority, thus compensating for their country's decline in the world of real power. (HOBSBAWM, 1994, p. 225)

The bibliographical picture on the subject is abundant and escapes the scope of this article. Munhoz (2004) promotes a synthesis of the analytical currents that address the conflict. The current of North American or traditionalist orthodoxy argues that, by refusing to withdraw from European countries, the Soviet Union is responsible for the Cold War. The official history or Soviet orthodoxy preaches that the conflict is the result of American aggressiveness, with the Soviet Union being responsible for protecting the Eastern European countries from American imperialism in the region. The revisionism of the 1950s highlights that the Soviet Union, devastated after the war, was not a threat to the Western world, thus the Cold War was the direct fruit of American foreign policy. The post-revisionism of the 1980s argues that the United States was forced to defend its European allies who felt threatened by the Soviet Union. The corporative current argues that the American

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[4] Entered into this polarization the countries aligned or influenced, economically or militarily, by the United States – the Western bloc – as opposed to the USSR and the Eastern European nations.

corporativistic model dictating the country's foreign policy in the construction of a new world order.

The Cold War was the result of the disagreements between the United States and the Soviet Union around the new geopolitical order to be drawn from the wreckage of Europe. Disagreements that have already manifested before the end of the war, with different and irreconcilable expectations from the Allies. Josef Stalin complained of the delay and indecision of the United States and England to carry forward a second battle front against the Germans, which generated the suspicion that the two western capitalist powers would be waiting for the conflict to be set to guarantee the defeat of both the enemy Germany and the Socialist Soviet Union (MUNHOZ, 2004).

Gaddis (2005) adds two factors that contributed to this framework. The first is the disagreement among Stalin, Harry S. Truman, and Winston Churchill regarding the control, occupation, and government model to be imposed on defeated Germany. The other is the impact of the nuclear bomb. Used in Hiroshima for Japanese surrender, it was considered a threat by Stalin, even though the USSR was also secretly working on its own nuclear program. These factors "help to explain why this new conflict emerged so quickly after the old one had come to an end" (GADDIS, 2005, p. 26).

In the domestic environment of the United States, where the movie *Bridge of Spies* is set, the effects of the Cold War were more visible than in countries dominated by Soviet influence. In addition to the constant threat of the atomic bomb, anticommunism infected the public life of the Americans, in a more incisive way, between the end of the 1940s until the middle of the 1960s. The "red menace" needed to be faced in several fronts: parties, unions, companies, ethnic and religious groups, magazines and newspapers of great circulation. "For the common American citizen, it represented the danger of the undercover communist, intending to subvert the order to impose the totalitarian dictatorship" (MUNHOZ, 2004, p. 274).

The country's youth was the preferential target of the obsession with communism. "Boy Scouts were taught that communists were the enemy; parochial school students learned that communism was inherently evil because it was 'godless'; and public school students had to memorize the 'evils' of communism to pass civics tests" (LEVERING, 2016, p. 65). Mass transit vehicles in the period, such as the magazines *Time*, *Newsweek*, *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Reader's Digest*, as well as

the newspaper chain of entrepreneur William Hearst[5] took on strong anticommunist editorials positions.

However, more than the media, the anticommunist crusade found in the cinema its greatest ally. In 1938, the Un-American Activities Committee[6] was created with the intention of investigating subversive elements in government and private life. During and after the war, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) gathered information about communists and sympathizers infiltrated in the Hollywood studios. At Congressional hearings in 1947, under pressure from Senator Joseph McCarthy, officers and executives such as Jack Warner reported several professionals suspected of having communist bonds. Warner, as Ronald Reagan and Gary Cooper, were called "friendly witnesses".

The "non-friendly" witnesses, mostly screenwriters, evoked the First Amendment – which guaranteed them freedom of expression in their work – and avoided denying that they were communists. Some were arrested, others cast out from the country, and those who remained went into a blacklist and were unable to find work. Screenwriter Dalton Trumbo[7], for example, managed to stay active by writing scripts under pseudonyms. The persecution of writers was justified by the desire of congressmen to show to the public that the Hollywood films were taken by communist ideas (BORDWELL; THOMPSON, 2003).

The paranoid climate was such that the FBI closely monitored the American film production from 1942 to 1958, arguing that they were neutralizing communist propaganda. Before television became an accessible consumer good in American households, cinema played the role of both popular entertainment and dissemination of ideas and values. Hence the FBI, the HUAC committee, and the studio executives worked on two fronts: to contain ideas considered subversive and to promote the production of films with American ideals.

> By stating that at some point of Hollywood production entertainment was confused with political propaganda, the HUAC implied that viewers would have been influenced by communist propaganda when they saw films that, at first glance, had been made just for fun. (SILVA, 2013, p. 123)

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[5] Communications entrepreneur, owner of radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and news services, who inspired the protagonist of the film *Citizen Kane* (1942), by Orson Welles.

[6] House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).

[7] The historical drama *Trumbo* (2016), by Jay Roach, shows the involvement of the writer with the Communist Party of the United States and his banishment from the industry.

The collaboration between the FBI and the studios found in J. Edgar Hoover, the conservative and anticommunist department director, a strong ally, to the point that the term "hooverism", a kind of anticommunist fanaticism, indicated the action of the agents who hunted suspects in the cinema industry and their influence on films, even before the end of the world conflict and the beginning of the Cold War. "The FBI understood the Cold War very well as a cultural and ideological battle, in which mass media were a central battleground" (SBARDELATTI, 2012, p. 99). The pressure on films resulted in changes in the characterizations of villains. In spy films, for example, Nazi spies and saboteurs of the 1940s were replaced by Soviet agents (DICK, 2016).

With the end of the war, Hollywood was engaged in another warfare, by both pushing professionals considered communist and producing films conscious of their strength in the popular imagination. The national anticommunist effort contaminated other areas of cultural production, such as music and comics, however, in the films "[...] this drama was elevated to a cosmic battle against national insecurity..." (HOBERMAN, 2011, p. xxi).

During the 1950s, the Cold War yielded several documentaries commissioned to show and praise the American military achievements, such as the importance of surveillance operations carried out by the Navy. *Nightmare in red* (1955) deals with the rise of communism in the USSR and advocated the idea that the tyranny exerted by the czar was replaced by the tyranny of Stalinism, equaled to Germany's Nazism. *Anarchy USA* (1966) even attributes protests for racial equality to the work of communist agitators (LANDON, 2003, p. 72).

Stimulated by the studios, who tried to do their part in the national effort to hunt the communists, several fictions about the period were released in theaters, such as the spy films with Soviet villains acting in American territory *I married a communist* (1950) and *I was a communist for the FBI* (1951)[8]. This, based on a real event, deals with Matthew Cvetic, an employee of the Pittsburgh public employment agency who infiltrated the Communist Party of his city from 1943 to 1950.

Silva (2013) recalls that the real Cvetic became very well known in the United States after revealing his disguise in testimonials, surveys, and

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[8] Of the wide range of anticommunist productions of the period, at least two have become classics of the noir genre: *Pickup on South Street* (1953, Samuel Fuller), about a pickpocket who finds himself involved in a spy plot, and *Kiss me deadly* (1955, Robert Aldrich), in which the protagonist helps a woman on the run and is swallowed up to a plot around a nuclear artifact.

hearings to the authorities. Treated as a hero in lectures on the dangers of communism and drawn to celebrity status by the media, Cvetic attracted the attention of Warner Bros., which signed a contract in 1950 to turn his story into a film. First anticommunist title of the studio, *I was a communist for the FBI* debuted in January 1951 and became prominent among films that denounced communist activities in American society. Jack Warner, powerful producer and anticommunist with conviction, was betting that the film could "[...] Halt the march of those who were trying to undermine the foundations of our democratic structure" (SILVA, 2013, p. 143).

The climate of anticommunist paranoia has been exploited to exhaustion in hundreds of titles, mostly B-films with low-budget, rapid filming, unknown cast, implausible plots, and dubious aesthetics. But what these films were able to do was exorcise both the fear of the communist invasion threat – materialized in aliens who attempted to invade the United States or infiltrate among the inhabitants of their cities, taking control of their minds and bodies – and the fear of the effects of a Soviet nuclear attack – symbolized by ants, spiders, and other mutant insects (O'DONNEL, 2003). Some titles of the period that have become classics: *Invaders of the body snatchers* (1956), *The day the Earth stood still* (1951), *The thing from another world* (1951), *The blob* (1958), *The fly* (1958).

Before the *Bridge of Spies*, the Cold War had previously been addressed by Steven Spielberg in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008), the fourth title with the adventurous archaeologist played by Harrisson Ford. If in the three previous films the enemy was symbolized by the Nazis and their thirst for secret treasures, in this Jones faces the Soviets, led by Irina Spalko (Cate Blanchet). The plot is set in 1957 – the same year that *Bridge of Spies* begins – and shows Jones and the Soviets in search of a crystal skull endowed with supernatural powers.

Bridge of Spies declares from the beginning to be "inspired by real events". Unlike the term "based on", common in historical films, the presence of the "inspired by" suggests a greater flexibility of the manipulation of the facts in favor of dramatic progress. The plot deals with the real case of the prison, in 1957, in New York, of Rudolf Abel (Mark Rylance), spy at the service of the Soviets.

To give the prisoner the right to a fair trial, James Donovan (Tom Hanks), an insurance expert lawyer, is indicated for the defense of Colonel Abel, as the FBI treats the spy. Donovan gets excited about the case and, despite the criticism of the press, his wife, and his boss, he believes that the accused should be entitled to the same legal

system that other Americans, innocent or guilty, would have. The case is presented in a court in New York and Abel is sentenced to 30 years of prison. Donovan appeals to the Supreme Court and suffers another defeat.

During the trials, an American pilot who made aerial photographs is captured and taken prisoner in East Germany. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) suggests that Donovan go to East Berlin and negotiate with the Germans and the Soviets the exchange of Abel for the pilot Gary Powers. However, Donovan learns of the arrest of a young economics student who attempted to cross the wall and imposes on the Soviets the release of the young man as a condition for Abel's return.

The screenplay was inspired by Donovan's memoir – published in 1964 and reissued when the film was released in 2015. The book brings some details not mentioned in the film, such as the events that led to the capture of Abel. After disagreements with his assistant, Reino Häyhänen, who lived with him in new York and had involvement with alcohol and prostitution, Abel complained of him to Moscow and the spy was ordered to return to the Soviet Union. Fearing to be punished, Häyhänen filed for asylum at the American Embassy in Paris and told to the FBI everything about Abel and his painting studio in Brooklyn. Against his will, Donovan was appointed by the Brooklyn Lawyers Association to defend the spy and charged him US$10 thousand, donated subsequently to three universities.

The greater freedoms taken refer to the condensation of temporality, a common resource in historical productions (ROSENSTONE, 2010). In the film, the exchange of spies occurs a few weeks after the capture of Abel, but it actually occurred four years and three months later. Although Abel's family received intimidating letters and phone calls, no attack against his home occurred, as shown in the film. Abel was arrested in June 1957. The airplane piloted by Francis Gary Powers was shot down in May 1960 – in the film the two events are very close.

Donovan did not see any fugitive firing on the Berlin Wall and did not have his overcoat stolen by young people in East Berlin – which would have caused him a cold. The Berlin Wall itself, built in the early morning of August 13, 1961, in the film is seen being erected at the time that the student Frederic Pryor tries to cross it, an event that occurred four years after the arrest of the spy Abel. The screenplay written by Matt Charmann and Ethan and Joel Cohen lacks the sarcasm and ambiguity that characterizes the work of the filmmaker

brothers, making the narrative a clash between the values of American democracy – symbolized by Donovan – and the Soviet-German regime.

In the film, Spielberg chooses to represent the atmosphere of fear from that period from the perspective of the children. In the first one, there is an intervention by the narrator through the transition between two spaces approached by the sound feature. Abel and Donovan await the commencement of trial at court, when the judge enters and an official informs: "All rise". The statement is answered not in this jury space, but in the following, in which we see a classroom where children rise from their desks and stand upright. The camera moves away and we see the group of children with their hands on their breasts giving the oath to the flag, *The Pledge of Allegiance*: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all" (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

The motion of the camera reveals the teacher of the class, with hands on the chest. The children and her look up, outside of view. The camera moves away, rising, until we see the American flag in the upright position, in the left corner of the frame. The camera's motion is synchronized with the words of the oath, as if the flag – symbolizing the nation – was drawing the eyes of the children and demanding their loyalty this instant. After the end of the oath, we see black and white images of a nuclear explosion projected on a screen, with the narration of a male voice: "First, you need to know what happens when an atomic bomb explodes. There is a flash,

stronger than the sun, it can destroy buildings and break windows all over the city, but if you bend over and protect yourself like Bert, you will be safer. There are two types of attack, with and without any warning"[9].

The narration is superimposed to images of the bomb's effects – projected on the screen – and to the children's reactions. The flashes of the projection in the darkroom – which belong to the exploding bomb – illuminate briefly the face of a concentrated boy, filmed on a frontal plane, watching the projected film. Then, the projection shows trees swinging with the impact of the explosion and the frightened reaction of another child.

A brief image shows a house being destroyed and a frightened girl with braided hair. Finally, framed laterally – also to be differentiated from the three frontal planes of the children seen before – we see a girl with tears running through her face, with a blurred background, so that only her face draw attention (Figure 2). Only after this articulation of images from the film with the voice of the narrator and the reactions of the students does the camera movement reveal the teacher standing next to a rectangular screen, source of the explosions images (Figure 3). The Bert mentioned in the narration is a turtle, which demonstrates the didactic character of the film. We do not see the projector of this film, we just hear the sound of its operation.

Figure 2
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

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[9] Spielberg portrayed the atomic bomb on two previous occasions. In E*mpire of the Sun* (1987), the boy Jim observes, before a woman who has just died, the mushroom cloud and the flare of the nuclear explosion in Nagasaki. The film took the liberty of allowing the character to visualize the explosion in Shanghai, at 800 km of distance from Nagasaki. In *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008), in the beginning of the film, after a fight with Soviet agents in Area 51 in Nevada, Jones flees into the desert and escapes a nuclear test at a cenographic city when hiding inside a refrigerator. In the first case is the look of the child that justifies the geographic change of the terrestrial globe. In the second, the explosion is backdrop for another spectacular escapade of the character Indiana Jones. In *Bridge of Spies*, we see the explosions mediated by editing, by the looks of the children and their reactions, which makes them more impactful.
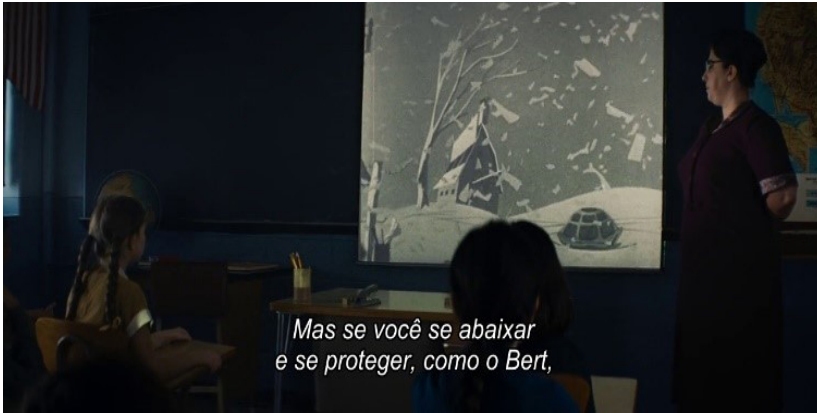
Figure 3
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

The panic caused by the images, experienced by children – whose emotional reactions are highlighted by the frontality of the planes –, which show their faces illuminated by the clarity of the explosions seen in the film, synthesize the atmosphere of the period. "Entire generations grew up under the shadow of global nuclear battles which, it was widely believed, could break out at any moment, and devastate humanity" (HOBSBAWM, 1994, p. 223,). If in Spielberg's films children used to be frightened by aliens, ghosts, dinosaurs, and other monsters, in this excerpt they are impacted by images of destruction after a possible Soviet nuclear attack. The implicit message of the filmmaker, in this film of a more political character than others of his filmography, is that images are never innocent and neutral. They can educate, frighten, or indoctrinate.

Bridge of Spies is also a narrative built to sustain the idea of civil liberties, in this case the right to a fair trial for a foreigner, even if accused of being a communist spy in American territory. Historian Eric Foner, author of a book dedicated to thinking American history from the perspective of freedom, remembers that this word has a long trajectory of conflicts around its own definition. The term had different meanings in the struggle for independence against the English, during the Civil War and the Cold War. "No idea is more fundamental to Americans' sense of themselves as individuals and as a nation than freedom" (2011, p. xxxiii).

What is perceived in the history of the country, complements Foner, is that the idea of freedom was transformed by the demands of excluded groups. The recognition of immigrant groups as American citizens, having the same rights as an American born in the country – a topic that Donovan raises in Abel's defense – owes

much to the abolitionist movement, which fought for the liberation of Black people and was resumed in the 1960s by the movements in favor of civil rights[10].

Spielberg saw in the event of 1957 an opportunity to think about the limits, validity, and extent of civil liberties, not so much at the time in which the film is set, but in 2015, adding a discussion on how these freedoms are difficult to be sustained[11]. This recourse to the past to discuss present problems, frequent in historical dramas, did not go unnoticed to criticism. Kent Jones, of *Film Comment*, saw in the film a parallel between the inflamed anticommunist discourse of the 1950s and the anti-immigration and Anti-Obama rhetoric when the film was released at the end of 2015[12]. Cris Barsanti, from *Film Journal International*, reminds that Spielberg can still be a dangerous filmmaker when dealing with great ideas, such as the debate on civil liberties and torture – a thorny topic after September 11th – and that the director manages to create a captivating narrative from these ideas, especially at the beginning of the film[13].

Jay Ledbettert, from *Film Inquiry*, analyzes the film within what he calls the "Spielberg effect", based on a permanent optimism, which can sometimes be tiring and corny, but that works in the film, he believes, because the filmmaker does not lose the focus of the very difficult situation Donovan has in his hands. The critic also recalls that the film confirms the change of direction in Spielberg's

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[10] Both civil rights and civil liberties relate to the social and legal environment of the United States and are modalities of protection that rely on legal guarantees. Civil rights are governmental actions created to promote racial and gender equality. As for civil liberties, they are defined as protection against government actions and are contemplated by the First Amendment: freedom of religion, of discourse, of the press, to meet and to petition (require) attitudes from the rulers. Available at: https://bit.ly/2T3REHI and https://bit.ly/1WeJ8kd. Access on: June 10, 2018.

[11] The critic associated *Bridge of Spies* to *Lincoln* (2012), a previous historical film of the filmmaker. For the critic Armond White, Spielberg suggests that both films are gloomy and sad because they reveal the American political anxiety. "In both, the director's interest is in two men (Lincoln and Donovan), in their words and acts to convince societies around them that their values (terminate slavery by administrative route and defend a man accused of espionage for the Soviets during the full paranoia of the Cold War) are correct and righteous, even if not fully accepted". Such focus on ideas makes films less appealing to the general public, if measured with the suspense *Jaws* (1975) and the chases of *Indiana Jones* or *Jurassic Park*. Available at: https://bit.ly/2WCWHjV. Access on: June 11, 2018.
Forrest Cardemenis, of *The Week*, also associates *Lincoln* with *Bridge of Spies*, highlighting that the two films show how the filmmaker has been increasingly showing his interest in politics. Lincoln's arguments to approve the 13th Amendment, to end slavery, are repeated by the president to his advisors and congressmen of the Democratic and Republican parties. The belief in the potential of American democracy, analyzes the critic, seems to jump from the politician to the lawyer Donovan. "If the government in Lincoln acts as a guarantor of civil liberties, Bridge of Spies is the story of a government that blatantly disobeys the law, rigs a guilty verdict for a Soviet spy, and then wants to kill him. Donovan is forced to advance his American ideals as a private citizen". Available at: https://bit.ly/2I4yb7h. Access on: June 14, 2018.

[12] Available at: https://bit.ly/2I7C6Aj. Access on: June 11, 2018.

[13] Available at: https://bit.ly/2FOtMns. Access on: June 12, 2018.

career, who could raise US$150 million to film a blockbuster, but has other concerns in mind. "There is still a sense of wonder, but it is the human spirit that moves him these days, not breathtaking dinosaurs or dashing adventurers" (LEDBETTER, 2015, s.p.)[14].

In 2015, year in which the film was released, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) listed among the main achievements of the year the reform or closing of prisons in several states; the approval of same-sex marriage by the Supreme Court and the launch of a 6,900-page report, prepared by the Senate Intelligence Committee, on the practices of torture perpetrated by the CLA after the attacks of September 11, 2001[15]. In *Bridge of Spies*, there are scenes in which both pilot Gary Powers and the student Frederic Pryor are tortured by Soviets and Germans.

The film's current character reflects not only the conflict between national security and civil liberties, an intense debate in the years following the September 11th attacks[16], but also the tense political environment between Barack Obama's United States and Vladmir Putin's Russia in 2015. The leaders of their countries gave compelling public statements surrounding the conflict in Syria and the fight against terrorism, especially against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isis). The United States supported the overtaking of the regime of dictator Bashar al-Assad, which in turn was supported by the Russians. Putin claimed Assad was necessary to confront the terrorists[17]. It is in this Cold War reissue environment that *Bridge of Spies* is launched. One of the producers of the film, Marc Platt, stated at the time: "Conversations of nuclear disarmament and the potential of nuclear war couldn't be more in the news in the last six months in our country, much as they were in the late 50s and early 60s, where the conversation was dominated by the fear of nuclear proliferation So it is actually shocking how history mirrors itself" (JOHNSON, 2015, s.p.).

In the film, civil freedom translates into brief scenes in the courts. Spielberg films in different ways the trials of spies in American territory and in Moscow. The

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[14] Indeed, the latest productions of the filmmaker are oriented towards more complex themes. Even in a film like *Ready player one* (2018), behind the narrative of a young man who enters a virtual world seeking for a prize, there is a blunt criticism of the relationship that contemporary society establishes with virtual reality resources.

[15] Available at: https://bit.ly/2V6I7kA. Access on: June 18, 2018.

[16] Theme approached by Spielberg more directly in *Minority Report* (2002).

[17] Information extracted from: https://bit.ly/2UvhrNr and https://bbc.in/2CZ2JnV. Access on: June 14, 2018.

first hearing of the Soviet Abel takes place in the justice of New York. There is a brief dialogue between Donovan and Abel, seated in front of the public (Figure 4). The plans are close to the actors and there is a neutral illumination, with no element that can draw attention.

Figure 4
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

The next trial, still in the United States, begins with a plan in which Abel outlines a drawing of the judge on a sheet of paper. An open plan shows the public standing, after the entrance of the judge in the hall. The magistrate asks Abel to rise. The verdict is that Abel should serve a 30-year sentence in a federal institution. There are only two brief moments when the camera moves in the scene: the first takes place towards Abel, before the judge announces the sentence, and the second reveals the tense faces of the audience hearing it.

After having his spy plane shot down, American pilot Powers is brought to trial in a Soviet court. The scene is very short, filmed in just one plane, with the camera moving to reveal the judges, who speak in Russian. A man translates to English. Powers is standing in a pulpit. The camera movement ends when the public applauds standing the verdict of ten years of confinement for crimes committed against the State. The place is a huge hall, with lots of windows that filter the light, and red flags that exhibit the symbol of the sickle and hammer. Flashes are shoot and cameras film the verdict (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

The film key for the three trials, recorded with field depth, is in the camera movement in each of the scenes. It is static in the two scenes at the courthouse in New York and all filmed in movement when in Soviet territory. These options suggest a differentiation between two legal systems. In the American courts, the découpage in brief plans particularizes accused, defender, magistrate, and audience: the different instances that involve a trial in this legal environment are exposed, each corresponding to the space of a plan – even if brief. In the Soviet court, the short plan-sequence fuses indictment and sentence with such synthesis and quickness that it eliminates any possibilities of defense – characteristic of totalitarian regimes – in addition to presenting this verdict as a public spectacle for an uniform mass that involves jury, judge, juryman, and audience.

The criticism of the East German regime is shown in the representation of the spaces. The Berlin of the German Democratic Republic shown in the film visually recalls the atmosphere of Auschwitz, the field to where Jewish women are sent in another of Spielberg's historical films, *Schindler's list* (1993). Donovan arrives at the access control post on the eastern side on a snowy morning. The position of the camera at ground level shows a barbed wire barrier on the board – as if from that point on there was a large prisoner camp. The lawyer cuts the waiting line, addresses two young soldiers, who scream for him to return to the line. He speaks a few words in German, points to the clock until an officer, tall, thin and bony-faced, verifies Donovan's passport, his American nationality, and frees his passage. The excerpt suggests that the probability of an American visitor moving to the eastern side would be so low that the mere presence of one of them would be a reason to facilitate their entry, regardless of motivation.

Figure 6
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

Donovan passes through. The first image of East Berlin is that of a dog sniffing the snow-covered asphalt – an image reinforced with the perspective of the low camera, or *contra-plongée*, showing both the dog and Donovan passing close to the animal, with the wall surrounded by barbed wire behind them both (Figure 6). As soon as he reaches the end of the street, the lawyer is surrounded by a group of young people, who address him speaking in German. They are skinny, pale young men who steal his overcoat. The meeting is filmed with camera in hand, simulating a documentary style.

In *Bridge of Spies*, the camera remains in hand only in some scenes, when Donovan is in East Berlin. For most of the film, whether in West Berlin, New York, or Washington, it stays on tripod or moves with a steadycam[18], hoist, or rails. Political instability is translated cinematically by the deliberate instability of the images with dogs looking for food on the street, skeletal young people who steal from visitors, almost deserted streets, and a few old cars covered in snow. The color palette is reduced, opposing the whiteness of the snow to buildings, cars, and people in gray tones, suggesting a space that lacks life. It is as if the whole city evoked the oppressive and melancholic atmosphere of the prisoners and forced labor camps in World War II (Figure 7).

With the camera stabilized in a steadycam, Spielberg filmed the Soviet embassy in Berlin, where Donovan must find a German lawyer, as if it were the palace of a czar, with large halls decorated with tapestries, paintings (of Lenin), busts

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[18] Metal structure attached to the camera operator's body that allows continuous and fluid movements, with greater mobility than the travelling resource.

(of Karl Marx), in which double doors are opened by silent staff, revealing more rooms and more doors being opened, in a great bureaucratic ritual.

Figure 7
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

The excerpt in which Donovan witnesses, from a moving train, the assassination of fugitives from East Berlin, has a double importance in the film. In narrative terms, the scene is positioned in the narrative structure as a reinforcement and a reminder to the idealistic lawyer of his difficult mission – the defense of the Soviet spy and the exchange for two American prisoners – and that he should not give up on it. In cinematographic terms, the scene is built, in its alternation of subjective and objective plans, for the protagonist's gaze.

On the train back to West Berlin, Donovan naps against a bench. Suddenly, he wakes up, attracted by intense lights coming from the outside. He approaches the window of the train and we see, from his point of view, a man sneaking down the barbed wire fence, positioned on the eastern side of the Berlin Wall, illuminated by spotlights from the watchtowers. The lawyer looks frightened to somewhere outside of view, which motivates the cut for a brief plan in which one man supports another to climb the wall. Soon after, we see the two being hit by machine gun shots from the guards in the guardrooms. The camera holds a few seconds at the exact moment the two of them attempted to climb the wall, showing two other fugitives who managed to cross the wall. We observe Donovan's horrified reaction and then we see, from his perspective, the two fugitives dropping dead on the other side of the wall and the soldiers shooting alongside the spotlight (Figures 8, 9, and 10).
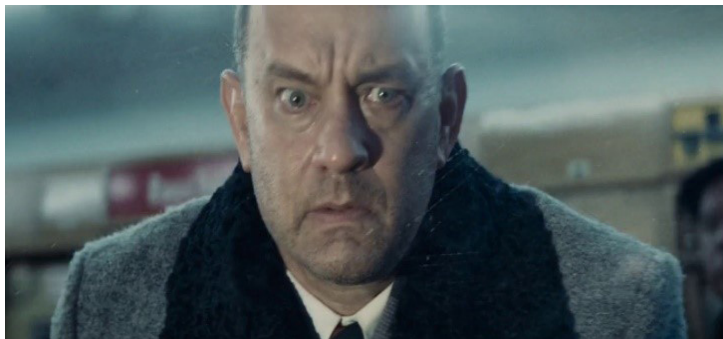
Figures 8, 9, and 10
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

What the brief scene reveals is a common resource of classical narrative (BORDWELL, 1985), which is to make the protagonist witness an event that shall reinforce his intention to act to alter a situation he considers wrong or unfair. The plot causes Donovan (and we, the public) to witness the execution of fugitives at the exact moment that he crosses the wall back to the western side.

At the end of the film, there is a scene that works as counterpoint to this one, but with a more patriotic connotation. Donovan is sitting in a subway car, reading

a newspaper that mentions his participation in the release of pilot Powers. Sitting on a window bench, he takes off his glasses and looks out. The camera approaches the window and shows Donovan's expression, demonstrating relief and some joy, observing a street in which one of the houses shows an American flag on its façade. Suddenly, his expression becomes serious: we see, very quickly, that he observes a group of five children who jumps a wire fence behind a house, crossing from one yard to another[19] (Figures 11 and 12).

Figures 11 and 12
Source: *Bridge of Spies* (2015).

The image immediately reminds him (and us) of the dead fugitives during their attempt to cross the wall. It establishes a very evident judgment of value: in East Berlin, dominated by the Soviet regime, confinement and execution of fugitives; in his democratic homeland, free childish pranks. The camera returns into the subway,

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[19] Forrest Cardamenis, of *The Week*, notes that this brief picture of the children jumping the fences is one more political image, in a line that retreats, cinematographically, to *Jaws* (1975). In the title that revealed the young Spielberg as the icon of blockbusters, there are clear references to the war that the United States fought in Vietnam, and the film was released during the malaise of the Watergate scandal. Available at: https://bit.ly/2I4yb7h. Access on: June 13, 2018.

makes a brief move and shows Donovan looking again to the landscape through the window. This is how the film ends: with Donovan on the right of the board, with information on the left, in the form of signs, about the destinies of Abel, Powers, Pryor, and Donovan after the events shown in the film.

The film is concluded, purposely, with the protagonist who observes a free world, the democratic model that his negotiator skills helped to preserve. The contrast between the children and the fugitives – moments seen from a moving train – also reaffirms the notion of the gaze, so rooted in Spielberg's filmography. As Donovan, who witnesses an execution, his films are full of characters who witness traumatic moments and from that observation are taken to action. In *Schindler's List*, is only after observing the massacre of the Krakow ghetto that businessman Oskar Schindler starts hiring Jewish workers to save them from the Nazis. At the beginning of *Lincoln* (2012), the politician observes images of slaves, a reminder of the responsibility he carries in approving the Emancipation Amendment. In *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), during the Allied attack to Normandy, Captain Muller suffers a momentary paralysis by witnessing the horror of the bodies of his companions mutilated by the German artillery on the coast. In *Minority Report* (2005), the very act of seeing is the theme of the film: the protagonist, a policeman accused of a crime, needs to have his eyes removed and replaced.

With *Bridge of Spies*, Spielberg reinforces the weight of the gaze that registers or is haunted by what it sees, but once impacted by an injustice or violence, the subject of that gaze acts. Donovan's conviction after witnessing the deaths at the Berlin Wall is reinforced. It is a conviction that moves a virtuous character, aware of the democratic values he needs to sustain, even if it means being hated and harassed by neighbors and relatives by accepting to defend a Soviet spy.

As we demonstrate with the analysis of some excerpts, the construction of this virtuous character is shaped within the codes of melodrama, a term that we applied bearing in mind the notion of bipolarity between good and evil (XAVIER, 2003). Donovan is the righteous man, who agrees to defend an enemy of his own country. He opposes the Germans and Soviets who inhabit a lifeless and violent city, full of marginals and false bureaucrats. However, even this opposition between virtue and tyranny offers, from Spielberg's perspective, space for the representation of the serious flaws of the political and juridical system in which the protagonist lives. The filmmaker suggests, with the cinematographic resources that he skillfully dominates, that no conflict, in any moment, can run over civil liberties.

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