

Behind the Image, Beyond the Image

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The Image of Sport in Soviet Animation in 1969-91

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Abstract This article analyses the image of sport in Soviet animated artworks produced from 1969 to 1991. Cartoons for children in Soviet culture had an important educational value. Positive characters became role models for many generations of children. Sport has repeatedly turned out to be the topic for the plots of this type of art. However, it is during these years that we can observe an increase in the number of animation works on the topic of sports. The rise of the number of studios, orders and funding from the state influenced the growth of works on the topic of sports. Moreover, the Olympic Games were held in Moscow in 1980.

Keywords Sport. The image of sport. Soviet animation. Moscow Olympic Games. Sport animation.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 ‘Faster, Higher, Stronger’ vs. Let’s Live in Peace. – 3 “Olympics – You Are Beautiful!”. – 4 Today You Can’t Get Away from Sports, There Is No Salvation from Sports. – 5 Conclusion.

1 Introduction

The visual transmission of images of sports has existed for over 30,000 years. The first monuments depicting athletes were closely associated with the cult. Although ritual and sport do not coexist so clearly today, sports imagery continues to be a part of visual culture. The connection between the hero and the sport in fiction works can appear for several reasons. Firstly, it creates the image of an intellectual or superman (Sal’nikova 2017, 455). Secondly, it determines



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social status¹ (Sennikov 2020). Thirdly, it emphasises the significant sides of the character (courage, fortitude) or appearance. Not only the painting but also graphics and photography can be called the predecessor of animation in sports images (Yurgeneva 2019). Animation is a special kind of art in which the image, space and time are completely subordinated to the author's will. Unlike 'live' on television, limited by space and time, or photography, limited by 'frozen' motion, animation can express itself more freely. Make-up is not required to create an unusual image of the hero in animation, as all visual effects depend on animators' skill. I. Boyarsky writes:

рисуя образ, художник-мультипликатор создает символ, эквивалентный слову писателя; используя движение, художник-мультипликатор видоизменяет символ, способствует его динамическому перевоплощению, что усиливает драматургию. (Boyarsky 1996)

drawing an image, a cartoonist creates a symbol equivalent to the writer's word; using movement, the animator transforms the symbol and contributes to its dynamic reincarnation, which enhances the drama.²

Another feature of animation is the blurring of the line between art-work and reality. A whole universe is created around any successful cartoon. It is often used especially in modern culture. However, the characters of children's cartoons were the first to leave the screens. In the USSR, well-known images from cartoons such as Wolf and Hare from the popular animated series *Nu, pogodi!* (Well, Just You Wait!) were among popular toys. Soviet children saw '3D-versions' of the characters. For example, the Wolf who is collecting falling eggs into a basket in the videogame *Nu, pogodi!*.³ The whole world watched this transition of the drawn character into reality in 1980: the symbol of the Olympic Games, Mishka, was flying away to the words of the song *Goodbye, our tender Mishka, return to your fairy forest!* performed at the Closing ceremony of the Olympics in Moscow. This part of touching good-bye still evokes pleasant nostalgic feelings in the souls of people living in post-soviet countries. However, other heroes before Mishka took the place of the leading sports heroes.

1 Tennis or golf as a sport of the 'elite'.

2 Unless otherwise indicated all translations are by the Author.

3 The portable electronic game of the Electronics trademark.

2 'Faster, Higher, Stronger' vs. Let's Live in Peace

'Citius, Altius, Fortius' or 'Faster, higher, stronger', the previous Olympic motto, symbolised the entire sports and physical culture movement in the USSR.⁴ Different places such as stadiums, palaces, and sports grounds in courtyards made Soviet children perceive sports through the prism of 'achievement' since childhood. The *Ready for Labour and Defence of the USSR* system and the unified sports classification system, which were introduced at the beginning of the last century, determined an athlete's place among others. Of course, animation developed children's desire for new records and achievements. Cartoons based on the idea that 'the most hardworking wins' were already traditional by the 1970s. Back in 1948, the cartoon *Champion* (The Champion) by Alexander Ivanov was released. In this, the recognised champion Gray Wolf loses to a young skier at number '5'. The commentator notes in the finale: "This is what systematic training means, this is what the will to win means!". Another famous cartoon about sports *Neobyknovennyy Match* (Unusual Match, 1955), features the confrontation between wooden toy football players from a 'Football' set and bobbleheads from the STS (soft toys section). STS pursue Olympic ideals in everything. They are committed to the values of fair play and train hard. Unfortunately, it can not be said the same about their rivals who repeatedly used dirty tricks during the match. The team of the bobbleheads wins, confirming the moral 'whoever is too presumptuous, he is often duped!'. The fair play theme continues in the sequel *Starye znakomye* (Old Friends, 1956), which was made by the same directors – Mstislav Pashchenko and Boris Dezhkin – and showed familiar characters. The wooden footballers decided to play water polo and played a match with the STS using deception. Despite all the wooden tricks, they lose again, and the cunning ones are hound out of the Toy Department.

The concept of achieving a result after hard work was characteristic of the entire communist ideology; therefore, it was quite naturally reflected in cartoons. Sport is a good topic for the embodiment of this idea because success in it depends on hard work. *S boru po sosenke* (From the Pine Forest) stands out from the works mentioned above of animation. Directors Zinaida and Valentina Brumberg created it. *S boru po sosenke* was based on the script by Maurice Slobodsky and Yakov Kostyukovsky.⁵ Some viewers compare this cartoon with Boris

⁴ The new Olympic motto sounds like 'Faster, higher, stronger – together'.

⁵ They both worked on such recognised masterpieces of Soviet comedy as *Operatsiya 'Y' i drugie prikllyucheniya Shurika* (Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures), *Brilliantovaya ruka* (The Diamond Arm), *Kavkazskaya plennitsa, ili Novye prikllyucheniya Shurika* (Kidnapping, Caucasian Style).

Dezhkin's *Neobykvennyy Match* since the antagonists are pieces of wood too, and the fans are also shown as a united mass. There are also stereotypical images of photographers who are ready to do anything for a beautiful shot. Although the viewer sees the confrontation between the 'professionals-pieces of wood' and the hard-working protagonists, similar plot twists like the scoring by the antagonists and the penalty shoot-out again, the cartoons are different. First of all, the idea *S boru po sosenke* shows that talent is needed to achieve success and teamwork. Every footballer of the *Yolki* (Pines) team is an excellent player who daily improves some of his skills: Churban has a cannon strike, the centre-forward Goloveshkin has a beautiful header, central defender Kostolom has an aggressive style of play, and the goalkeeper Stoerosov has long arms. Moreover, in *Druzhba* (Friendship) players improve their physical fitness with the help of various sports, train passes and develop the strategy for team play. Dezhkin's cartoon seems to be designed for a younger audience. It looks so because other toys surround the characters, the narration is in the fairy tale style, and morality is given in the finale. On the contrary, in *S boru po sosenke* only an adult can understand jokes; there is no clearly defined morality either.⁶ The most interesting distinguishing point is the presence of a coach image in the Brumbergs' work. The coach of *Druzhba* embodies the father archetype: he instructs his fosterlings, cares, and does not condemn them for losing in the first half. The coach of *Yolki* is shown to be less than ideal. He is friends with the head of the team Pen'-Koloda. Sychok agrees with him in everything and even sips wine during the break between the halves. Of course, the images in the cartoon *S boru po sosenke* are very grotesque. However, this manner of narration fully allows the author to convey the problems of real football at the time, i.e., the purchase of players who cannot interact in one team, dirty games, and the meaning of an official's word in the sports process.

The cartoon *Futbolnye zvyozdy* (Football Stars, 1974) is dedicated to the same sport. The interest of cartoonists in football in 1974 was not random. The World Championship and the European Championship were held in 1970 and 1972. Soviet fans were amazed by Pele's stunning performance. However, the results of the Russian team were not impressive. Dezhkin's *Futbolnye zvyozdy* embodied all Soviet fans on the waiting screen. According to the plot, a new coach comes to the *Tulpan* (Tulip) team after they have lost a match with a crushing score. Despite the provocations, the characters prepare intensively

⁶ For example, speaking about wooden players, the coach comments, "we will select the most oak ones". The moments of the outbidding of the players for the *Yolki* team are the most amusing. Churban, married to Matryona Pavlovna (she looks like a nested doll), is promised to be attached as a coach. Goloveshkin is offered to exchange a cart with a horse for a fashionable car. And Kostolom is promised to be given a three-room flat.

and cope with a new rival – the *Gladiolus* (Sword lily) team. It is funny that the *Gladiolus* players wear long hairstyles like the Federal Republic of Germany team and have dark skin like the Brazilians. The matches in this cartoon are voiced by a real football commentator, Vladimir Pereturin, for an even more explicit comparison with current events.

The second series of adventures of three Cossacks, *Kak kazaki v futbol igrali* (How Cossaks Played Football), produced by KievNauch-Film, was another example of the ‘fashion’ for football. Three main characters – Gray, Oko and Tour – learn about a special award from the British Queen for the winner and play football in different countries. The distinctive features of this drawn cartoon are colourful characters: both the main characters and their rivals in the game. The first opponents are knights resembling Germans as they wear armours. Moreover, the rearrangements in the game are more reminiscent of the famous ‘pig’ than the schemes of football players. The musical accompaniment completes the image. This battle translates the metaphor of sport as a struggle. The second rivals are French. Their manner of playing is no longer warlike but rather resembles a minuet. In addition, the setting surrounding the field resembles the Palace of Versailles. Although this comic depiction of the peculiarities of the national sports technique is exaggerated, it is not devoid of truth. The Cossacks opposed their first opponents with dexterity, as it is challenging to play a quick game in armour.

Moreover, a Ukrainian *hopak* was opposed to the French minuet. The British, who are the ancestors of football, are the Cossaks’ opponents in the finale. While it is raining at the English stadium, the Cossacks fail. Nevertheless, Tour hits the clouds and the weather changes. After that, Cossacks show all their skill and bit the British. The presence of vivid national features became traditional for post-war Soviet animation. Moreover, just as the theme of football in this series of cartoons by Vladimir Dakhno is not accidental, the appearance of teams from other countries allows us to reveal in more detail the peculiarities of the Ukrainian Cossacks.

Friendship and kindness became another common topic in Soviet animation about sports in 1969-1991. These concepts are especially vividly embodied in cartoons about the Olympic Mishka, but we will talk about them later. The concepts of friendship and kindness belonged to the basic ones in the upbringing of the young generation. As S. Asenin noted in his work *Screen Wizards*:

главное – умение через трюк, стилизацию, условно-сказочную, наполненную поэтической фантастикой образность показать подлинную жизнь, раскрыть ее серьезные, достойные размышлений проблемы, утвердить моральный авторитет доброты, сердечной щедрости, красоты, отзывчивости и других высших духовных ценностей гуманизма. (Asenin 1974, 222)

the main thing is the ability to show real-life through a trick, stylization, which is conventionally fabulous, filled with poetic fantasy to reveal its serious problems worthy of thought and to assert the moral authority of kindness, heartfelt generosity, beauty, responsiveness and other higher spiritual values of humanism.

According to S. Ginzburg (1971, 183), cartoons based on modern fairy tales were not rare. If we watch the puppet cartoon about the clumsy bear *Topchumba* (The Stamper, 1980), based on the tale of Boris Zakhoder, we see the relationship between Mishka and other forest animals. They consider him a rude bully because he always hurts them. Badgers decide to stand up for the offended inhabitants of the forest, deciding everything in a one-on-one duel. Misha loses it and goes to the daddy bear in tears. The positive image of the father in Soviet cartoons was absent until the 1980s (Gričaj 2013, 58). Some researchers associate this with the unique role of the state in social institutions, including the family: M.N. Epstejn (2006) sees the root of father's alienation from his position in family relations in Soviet atheism, and V.N. Druzhinin (1996, 54) thinks that state interference in family affairs is the cause. Mishka's dad is shown as a highly positive character. He is kind, caring and tolerant. Dad invites Mishka to become stronger, faster and more dexterous in a playful way. Seeing how hard Mishka is trying, the animals show kindness and decide to support him. The main hero and other characters learn the joys of sports, and Mishka becomes the favourite of all forest dwellers.

The affirmation of sporting friendship was mainly reflected in the animated works of Boris Dezhkin *Meteor na ringe* (Meteor in the Ring, 1970) and *Prihodi na katok* (Come to the Skating Rink, 1981). *Meteor na ringe* continues the confrontation between the *Meteor* and *Vympel* teams, not in hockey, but in boxing.⁷ Choosing a sport, the director started from general interest, as he did that in other works.⁸ The broadcasts of professional boxing fights are becoming popular with sports fans are becoming popular. At the beginning of the cartoon, the characters play chess. The whole country watched chess competitions at the time. Despite the harsh fights in the ring, the teams *Meteor* and *Vympel* cannot be called opponents in life, which is vividly confirmed by the ending of the cartoon. The heroes go to a fashionable cafe *Buratino* together and celebrate the past compe-

⁷ B. Dezhkin created two cartoons about the opposition of these teams in hockey: *Shaybu! Shaybu!!* (Puck! Puck!, 1964) and *Match-revansh* (Rematch, 1968).

⁸ *Match-revansh* practically illustrates the confrontation between the teams of the USSR and Canada. On *Futbolnye vzyozdy*, as mentioned above, the heroes fought with a foreign team, similar to the Brazilians and the Germans.

tition. The original aesthetics of boxing fights in *Meteor na ringe* is based on musical accompaniment, which dictates the style of athletes movements and their surroundings. During *lezginka*, athletes perform characteristic dance steps for a man's party. The female fans become dons, and the enemy becomes a bull under *Carmen* by J. Bizet. Such militant images reflect to some extent, the view of sport as a sublimation of aggression.

Prihodi na katok tells us about the friendship of the *Meteor* team with the skaters. In the 1970-1980s, Soviet figure skating flourished. Couples such as L. Pakhomova and A. Gorshkov, I. Rodnina and A. Zaitsev, T. Zhuk and A. Gorelik, L. Belousova and O. Protopopov took to the ice. This sport attracts interest not only because of athletes' success. The aesthetics surrounding it rivets adults and children to the screens.⁹ The image of the skaters in this animated work is more Soviet than before. The figure skaters are more like children in comparison with the previous cartoons of the series. The costumes, hair-styles, and hair colour also look more familiar. This is most likely due to a general softening of the visual style. The friendship between the athletes is based on the tough hockey players' interest in fragile girls-figure skaters and is supported by the division of the rink during training. In this episode, the usual bully from the *Meteor* team appears before us from an entirely new romantic side.

3 “Olympics – You Are Beautiful!”

This was the phrase that the director S. Tolkachev used to entitle his documentary about the XXII Olympic Games. An incredible scope of training, including the field of culture, overcame Moscow in 1974, which reflected a significant event in Soviet culture. Conventionally, animated films inspired by the Olympics can be divided into three groups: the ones that touch upon the history of sports and the Olympic Games; cartoons about the upcoming Olympics and Olympic sports; animation with the participation of the symbol – the Olympic Mishka. As G. Borodin writes in his extensive article on the Moscow Olympic Games, despite frequent requests for works on opportunistic themes:

почти во всех случаях обращения аниматоров к олимпийской тематике инициатива исходила снизу. Масштабное производство мультипликационных фильмов на сей раз не было госзаказом. (Borodin 2014)

⁹ Costumes and a variety of music, including foreign.

in almost all cases, when animators turned to Olympic themes, the initiative came from below. The large-scale production of animated films was not a government order this time.

The history of the Olympic Games was very expressive from an artistic point of view: the director and production team could fully immerse themselves in another culture and use a variety of musical accompaniment. A new series of the Cossacks' adventures – *Kak kazaki olimpitsami stali* (How the Cossacks Became Olympians, 1978) – was the first example of such interaction. The Olympic gods Ares and Zeus join the main characters we know. The main conflict is built precisely on their confrontation. Ares, as a classic trickster, sows war and destruction, thereby disturbing the peace of Zeus. The theme of mythology and history of the Olympic Games is revealed more deeply in the works *Bolshaya estafeta* (The Big Relay), *Koleso Fortuny* (Wheel of Fortune) and *Olimpioniki* (Olympionics). *Bolshaya estafeta* (The Big Relay), which was released in 1979, was made in the genre of a film poster. The viewers go through the history of the Olympic Games in 8 and a half minutes. They learn about the Olympic Games of Ancient Greece and the ones revived in 1896 by Baron Pierre de Coubertin. The main idea of the cartoon was the continuity, of antiquity and modernity, from one Olympic event to another. The image of Moscow unfolds to the accompaniment of the song *Moscow Nights*, which was chosen, apparently, due to its extreme popularity among foreign audiences.¹⁰ The screen shows images of a birch forest, Red Square, and Olympic buildings. Along with the drawn fragments, there are stills of documentary chronicles. In the finale, the Olympic flame lights up, and we meet the Olympic Bear with a tray covered with a towel *rushnik*. This image immediately gives rise to an association with bread and salt, but gold medals are covered. Moscow is ready to welcome athletes.

F. Khitruk's *Olimpioniki* (Olympionics), released after the Moscow Olympic Games, is distinguished by the most detailed story about the history of the ancient Olympic Games. The cartoon is built on a combination of drawn and documentary fragments. We learn the story thanks to Z. Gerdt's voiceover. This work turned out to be incredibly informative. Within 18 and a half minutes, the viewer is transported to Olympia, gets acquainted with the legends about the origin of the Games, and learns that familiar scientists were sportsmen. The gambling, cruel part of the games was not forgotten either. The mu-

¹⁰ Having been written in 1955 for a documentary film about the Spartakiad of the Peoples of the RSFSR, the composition was repeatedly used at various cultural events. One could hear it at the Moscow Festival of Youth and Students in 1957. Records with English and French versions of the song were released for the World Congress of Women in 1963. There were also various versions of arrangements by foreign artists.

sic written by S. Kallos, who was the author of music in the above-mentioned *Koleso Fortuny* and many other animation and films, completes the artistic image of the work.

V.A. Chizhikov invented the image of the symbol of the 1980 Olympics. In animation, we meet Mishka in *Kto poluchit priz* (Who Will Receive the Prize?), *Olimpiiski harakter* (Olympic Character), *Gde zhe medvezhonok* (Where Is the Bear?), *Perviy avtograf* (First Autograph), *Salut, Olimpiada!* (Salute, Olympics!), *Nokaut* (The Knockout), *Baba-yaga protiv!* (Baba Yaga is Against!). It is worth noting that it was decided not to create a single image of Mishka, so in each cartoon, the characters are slightly different. The first film about the kind Mishka was *Kto poluchit priz* by V. Kotenochkin, filmed in 1979. The main character takes part in a race, the winner of which will go to the Olympics in Moscow. But Mishka helps everyone in trouble at a distance and comes last. Despite the loss in sports results, the judges award the victory to our hero. They say, "the winner is the one who showed endurance, courage, kindness, attention to his comrades and sports honesty, the bear Mishka has won".

In *Gde zhe medvezhonok* forest animals have lost the future symbol of the Moscow Olympics and are ready to urgently display a replacement in a suit so as not to disrupt the world sports festival. It turned out that Mishka left on a *troika* following his bear friends from Minsk, Tallinn, Kyiv and Leningrad. The entire bear team manages to arrive directly at the guests, and they are waiting for the Olympians amicably at the Aeroflot plane with bread and salt. In the cartoon revue *Salut, Olimpiada!* Mishka becomes a conductor. Animals from all over the planet gather in Moscow to the cheerful accompaniment of the orchestra. The image of Olympic Mishka as a role model is revealed in *Nokaut*. Mishka helps the puppy choose the right company, teaches him not to smoke and plays sports to be strong and fight off the offender. In the finale, the antagonist dog also decides to get rid of bad habits.

The most amazing Mishka appears in the trilogy *Baba Yaga protiv!* (Baba Yaga is Against!). Being silent and wearing a set smile, Mishka does his job. He leaves for work in Olympic Moscow, makes souvenirs and gifts for the guests of the Olympics, and, of course, lights the Fire at the stadium. Masterfully executed from the side of character design (Baba Yaga and walks in fashionable outfits and has a manicure, Koschei wears a crown with a visor), the cartoon is plotted on an entertaining pursuit of negative characters for positive ones. In Soviet, and later Russian culture, it was remembered for the hero-in's favourite phrase, "And Baba Yaga is against!", which expresses a rhetorical protest against any actions.

The choice of Mishka as a symbol of the Olympics was not accidental. It was the meanings of strength, endurance and patriotism are hidden in the image of a bear. As noted T.A. Pershina:

образ медведя занимает важное место в духовном и фольклорном наследии народов России. (Perschina 2017, 428)

the image of a bear takes an essential place in the spiritual and folklore heritage of the peoples of Russia.

The King of the Forest needed to be endowed with such traits as friendliness, kindness, responsiveness is quite apparent. It was evident for an international event that took place during complex relationships with other countries.

The 1980 Olympics were sometimes reflected in animation as a cultural event. So, in the 13th episode of the animated series *Nu, pogodi!*, Wolf had to find the very same Hare among the guests who had come to the competition. Wolf decides to eat the figurine of Hare, and Hare decides to eat Wolf. According to L. Kaganovskaya, this series illustrates vividly the relations of the countries participating in the Cold War. She says:

в фантастическом мире мультипликационного кино враги тесно связаны одной «судьбой» и общей победой. Но при этом их деструктивные тенденции – их желание «поглотить» друг друга – оставляют их обоих ни с чем. (Kaganovskaya 2008, 385)

in the fantastic world of animated films, enemies are closely linked by one 'fate' and a shared victory. But at the same time, their destructive tendencies, that is, their desire to 'swallow' each other, leave them both with nothing.

Soviet animators made a significant contribution to the Olympic movement and created memorable images for the worldwide sports festival. Despite the differences in the political arena, the 1980 Olympics and its mascot Mishka will remain in the culture of the post-Soviet countries for a long time.

4 Today You Can't Get Away from Sports, There Is No Salvation from Sports

Animated films, which reflected the interest for sports in the USSR works, can be distinguished as a separate sub-theme. Animation not only for children but also for adults is among them. Of course, the image of the sport in the *Nu, pogodi!* series is the first in the row. The 4th episode is devoted to sports (as the 13th episode tells us about the Olympics in Moscow). Also, some sports images appear in the 1st, the 6th, the 8th and the 16th episodes. Physical exercises are often inscribed in the plot as some daily activity. They are cho-

sen according to the place where the action unfolds and the time of year. In summer, Hare goes hydroskiing on the beach, flies on a parachute outside the city. In winter, the characters go ice skating and skiing. In the 16th episode, chess is not played by the main characters but by the Hippopotamus, from whom the Wolf gets it for hitting the board with a bottle. The 4th episode mentions hurdling, weightlifting, gorodki, boxing, gymnastics, wrestling, pole-jumping. Wolf is shown to us in a fashionable tracksuit, 'two-ball' sneakers, and, of course, he has a medal as an attribute of all successful athletes. But according to the tradition of the comedy genre, the opposing character turns out to be a complete failure.

In children's animation on the theme of sports, V. Bordzilovsky's dialogue about the Duckling is also enjoyable. The protagonist from *Utyonok, kotoryy ne umel igrat v futbol* (The Duckling Who Couldn't Play Football) is a musician who learns to play the trumpet. Although he is not a sportsman, the idea of improving his skills is familiar to him since he is a musician. His antagonist is a famous soccer duckling, who is dressed in jeans and football boots. He listens to music from a portable tape recorder and even drives a motorcycle, creating a bad guy image. The conflict is based on the fact that the musician Duck is not at all inclined to sports. He remains unconvinced, and others agree, "but he knows how to play the trumpet".

The second part of the story, entitled *Kak utyonok-muzykant stal futbolistom* (How a Duckling-Musician Became a Football Player), was filmed six years later, in 1978. The Duckling-Musician meets the beautiful Duck, and he and the Duckling-Football player have a competition for her heart. According to the bet, the musician must learn to play football and be part of the team for the upcoming match, and the footballer must perform with a musical number on the trumpet before the game. In addition to displaying fashion for sports, the image of a family is fascinating. Only a mother brings up a Musician Duckling. She insists that he does not need football, but music is a serious business. And this attitude was expressed by many representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia. Football was not a suitable hobby.

The ten-part puppet show *38 popugaev* (The 38 Parrots), based on the work of Grigory Oster, was among the popular series of cartoons. In one of the series *Zaryadka dlya khvosta* (Gymnastics for the Tail, 1979), Monkey was faced with the task of climbing a palm tree. She did not have enough strength to do that. So Parrot advised her to do gymnastics. The production designer Leonid Shvartsman (2015) admitted that Lenin was the prototype of the bird.

The cartoon *Vovka-trener* (Vovka the Trainer), directed by A. Reznikov, who worked on the Olympics-80 series, contains two popular themes: science fiction and sports. According to the plot, the guys-hockey players do not accept Vovka in their team, and he comes to the hockey stadium late in the evening, when it is free. Sudden-

ly, little green men, Chuni-Muni, appear and fly away with the hero to play hockey in space. The moment of movement looks visually attractive. We encounter a planet that looks like a volleyball, a shuttlecock comet, a dumbbell satellite, cubes for board games, probably depicting another spaceship. It is also significant that the cosmonaut is also keen on hockey. He watches the broadcast on TV right in orbit. To the accompaniment of the song, a visual row of a record, sports equipment, and other items appear on the screen. The *Mishka Kosolapyi* (Clubfoot Bear) candy stands out among them. Instead of the bears from the picture *Morning in a Pine Forest* by I. Shishkin and K. Savitsky, we see Chuni-Muni on the wrapping. It seems as if the author wanted to bring together all the signs of Soviet childhood: sweets, games in the yard, passion for music and space.

The character from the *Stadion shivorot-navyvrot* (The Topsy-turvy Stadium) is the one who has never played sports himself and does not respect it. He is subject to the general fashion for this occupation, but he does not understand anything about it. Being dressed in a T-shirt with the inscription *Ny pogodi*, the protagonist cannot join the sports movement as real athletes cheerfully march past him into the stadium. The slogans: "The quieter you go - the further you will be", "Wash your hands before eating", "I will not forget the multiplication table", "When leaving, turn off the light" confirm his superficial perception. And the character admits, "TV is my best coach" in the beginning. Of course, the hero was created in the tradition of satire. But the animation's appeal to the image of an 'empty' expert indicates the scale of this problem in the sports community.

The cartoon *Metamorphosa* (Metamorphose) was on the verge of animation for children and adults. On the one hand, the idea is quite simple. The Olympic Mishka re-educated the bull, and they became friends. What a great plot for a children's cartoon! On the other hand, the images presented in the cartoon make us think about the subtext. Thus, the bull looks like a functionary. The goat looks like a typical amateur athlete, and Mishka is a professional athlete. All these characters were active participants in the country's sports life in reality. The functionary shows nihilism. Mishka tries to get through to him, while the goat only watches what is happening, shrugging his shoulders.

Among cartoons for adults, the film *Semeynyy marafon* (Family Marathon) is devoted to the theme of sports. It shows a woman's life in the modern world through the metaphor of a marathon. She manages to prepare her husband-athlete for the race. During the race, she cooks food, goes grocery shopping, follows her husband's achievements or failures, puts the children to bed, goes to the hairdresser's, changes his sneakers, brings food to the distance and finishes the race with him. The climax of this race is that the female character hastily carries away the haggard winner on her shoulders since she suddenly remembers a pan on the stove, which is not turned off.

In the short animation *Ne opozdal* (I'm Not Late) in 1984, the morning journey to work is also shown through sports metaphors. The moment of awakening is a boxing match with an alarm clock. Trying to get on a crowded bus, the hero clings to it on hydroski. Realising that he will be late anyway, the character turns into a javelin and flies to the roof of the trolleybus. To further accelerate the movement, he attaches a sail to the horns of the trolleybus. The main character manages to get to work on time, by 9:00. Although he has overcome all the difficulties on the way, he sits down and begins to solve the crossword puzzle.

The philosophical animation *Estapheta* (Relay) by B. Tuzanovich refers to the image of sport indirectly. Other people pass the baton during his life. They are people who have already renounced the principles of morality and human relations. And at this distance, the main character begins to resemble the others more and more, gradually turning into a Neanderthal.

The only example of non-satirical adult animation about sports is *Brek!* (Brake!) by H. Bardeen, which shows the author's view of boxing. The characters speak a fictional language, reminiscent of a mix of English, Spanish and Italian. The chosen genre of musical parody complements the picture. The director found very expressive techniques with the help of clay animation. Bruises and abrasions are shown using plasticine of a different colour. An injury of one of the boxers is shown as a hole in the chest. A doctor, in whose suitcase there is plasticine in the shade of each of the fighters, was summoned. The specialist treats him by closing the hole. When one of the boxers gets a face injury, the doctor sculpts a new one for him from the portrait. Knowing that professional boxers periodically resort to rhinoplasty and eyebrow plastic surgery, this moment looks like a joke on the verge of a foul. Bardeen allows himself to misbehave. So when they meet, boxers shake hands and then spit at each other. The referee shakes out the nuts and nails out of their gloves before the fight. A brand paper cup of Coca-Cola with water in it looks very apt in Soviet realities. The end of the battle is also worthy of praise from the fans of this sport. The athletes get tired. They practically stop fighting and take on the grip. The referee constantly has to say "Brake!" but this does not change the situation. Coaches get into the fray because of the boxers' failure. A draw is declared after the double coaching knockout.

5 Conclusion

In plots of Soviet animation from 1969 to 1991, we meet heroes-sportsmen who faced the problem of interest in sports and lack of abilities for practising it. They also needed the training to be successful, and it was difficult for them to continue their career because

they were becoming more and more popular as sportsmen. The educational component of animation is becoming essential. We can also see coaches, fans, judges, sports functionaries among the images. But an athlete was the main character of a sports animation. Some of the characters' problems are tackled humorously; some of them are covered by allegorical. The closer it was to the disintegration of the USSR, the darker and more severe or more humorous and carnival the images were becoming.

Unfortunately, we can find only rare examples of the above cartoons on modern TV screens. Adult animation, which has remained forgotten and specialised programs with an artistic overview of works of animation art, is especially rare (Vasil'kova 2015, 364). If we look for these cartoons on popular video platforms, they will have thousands of times fewer views than foreign or modern animated series. And this is not always determined by the artistic merits of the latter. Many works are forgotten over time, but I want to believe that at least some of the characters of Soviet animation about sports will be seen by future generations.

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