



Episode-by-Episode

Cold War Experience

culture

technology

espionage

the bomb

Knowledge Bank

Debate and Discuss

Cold War Challenge

Educator's Guide

About the Series

About the Site

Awards

RESEARCH it:

Feedback

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Cold War Experience

CULTURE

COLD WAR

The Movie Club

Our look back at the Cold War big screen classics

A 'spectre' of war in 'From Russia with Love'

"From Russia with Love" (1963)

Starring: Sean Connery, Daniela Bianchi, Robert Shaw

From CNN Interactive Writer Emily Soares

(CNN) -- In "From Russia with Love," thought by many to be the best James Bond film ever, 007 heats up the Cold War and delivers the sexiest détente yet between the free world and the evil empire.

In this, Sean Connery's second appearance as Bond, 007 is lured into a clever trap. International crime syndicate SPECTRE (Special Executive for Counter-Espionage, Terrorism, Revenge and Extortion) wants a top-secret Lektor decoder, used by the Soviets, and will use Bond and unwitting Russian cipher clerk Tatiana Romanova (Daniela Bianchi) as pawns.

According to SPECTRE's plan, once 007 has obtained the decoding device from Tatiana, SPECTRE thug Red Grant (Robert Shaw) will take it from him, leaving behind a very dead secret agent. Bond suspects something is afoot, but can't resist the prospect of a Soviet gal and a long-sought decoder.

In what seems an odd turn in her career, Lotte Lenya is cast as Rosa Klebb, the enduring stereotype of a Soviet taskmistress. A hard-as-nails matron gone bad, Klebb wears a poisoned knife blade in her shoe-tip and has defected from Soviet intelligence to work for SPECTRE.



FROM MGM/UA HOME VIDEO

Red-handed

A Soviet agent caught in the sights of Bond's Istanbul contact



Klebb recruits Tatiana, who knows nothing of the defection, and we learn, as if Klebb weren't



FROM MGM/UA HOME VIDEO
Guy gets girl

**Bond and Tatiana
(Daniela Bianchi),
the spy who loved him**

films preaching the Red apocalypse, for the world of Bond, the chess-playing Soviets must be stopped a) because they are formidable opponents and b) because they dress badly and have no sense of humor. Daniela Bianchi portrays the happy exception -- her character is the exotic side of Russia, to remind us that "the other" can, in rare Soviet cases, be sexy. She is young, after all, and her Soviet training is no match for the charms of Bond.

In lieu of the combat sequences World War II could deliver, Cold War audiences were treated to a battle of the gadgets. "Q," Bond's supplier of lethal gadgets, wouldn't really gear up the high-tech goodies until the following Bond film, "Goldfinger." But "From Russia with Love" gives us a taste: decoders, retractable wire garrotes, booby-trapped briefcases and periscope peep holes, just to start.

The secret agent-as-soldier was the perfect metaphor for the Cold War, a theater of battle without uniforms or group maneuvers. In this new war, solitary men in suits died quietly in closed train compartments, in crowds with the whisper of a silencer, or by poison injected with the point of an umbrella. And in contrast to the traditional field of war, the Cold War enemy was never easy to spot. Sometimes he or she was the least suspected among us, sometimes the most beautiful, sometimes the most trusted. As the post-World War II era of film shook out, espionage and paranoia would prove two of its most enduring themes.

"From Russia with Love" also is interesting in that its real villain, SPECTRE, is without any political allegiance but exploits Cold War tension to get what it wants. "Good work," Klebb tells Grant after he lobs a bomb into the office of 007's Turkish contact. "Who could the British suspect but the Russians? The Cold War in Istanbul will not remain cold for very much longer."

Ultimately, James Bond has more fun with the Soviets than did most of Cold War film secret agents. In the end, SPECTRE is foiled (for the moment) while

unwholesome enough for a '60s audience, that she also has a penchant for the ladies. At the time of the film's release, a Newsweek reviewer called Klebb "the conversion of all that should be comforting, feminine, societal, and safe" -- let ye women of the free world take note.

But Klebb is an obvious caricature. In a light-hearted turnaround after a decade of American



FROM MGM/UA HOME VIDEO

**Roll with the
punches**

Rosa Klebb (Lotte Lenya) puts the brass-knuckle test to SPECTRE operative Red Grant (Robert Shaw)

James and Tatiana, the Cold War rivals, sail off together into the Venetian sunset -- proving that love, or at least sex, can transcend the Iron Curtain.

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[Back to top](#)[Back to Culture main page](#)