

Title: Drawing Borders in the Sky: The Pirates and the Damsels in Distress of Aerial Hijackings in the Late-Soviet Press

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After the end of the Thaw, from the late 1960s through the 1980s, the Soviet Union experienced a surge in aerial hijackings, the goal of which for the dissidents, *refuseniks*, and malcontents who attempted it, was fleeing to the West. These hijackings became a source of international controversy in the politics of the Cold War. Internally, they provided an opportunity to reactivate the scapegoat mechanism, by means of which the regime sought to deflect popular antagonism onto a set of ready-made culprits. Soviet culture created two types of scapegoats: the self-sacrificing hero and the defendant at the show trials. Both of these scapegoats came into existence through the discursive practices in the Stalinist media and literature, though they may be also traced back to the Orthodox customs of monastic self-discipline and of publicizing the sinner's guilt (Kharkhordin 212, 251).

With the passing of Stalinism these sacrificial practices weakened and began to resemble a ritual, which in ancient times served to prevent both a new crisis and the need for a new sacrifice (Girard 92). The government seized on the instances of open resistance in order to renew its contract with the public and redirect its frustration. When two of the hijackings resulted in the deaths of young female flight attendants, their fate became fodder for the revival of the canonical ritual in the Soviet media, which will be the subject of analysis in this presentation.

#### Bibliography

Girard, Rene. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: The John Hopkins U Press, 1979.

Kharkhordin, Oleg. *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: a Study of Practices*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1999.